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THE QUEEN'S MAN.

A ROMANCE OF THE WARS OF THE ROSES.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Mistress Meg came back to the castle after her morning adventure, she was not over sorry to find that her grandfather had gone to bed, objugating Sir Thomas for the length of his mass, and too weary to wait for her greetings.

Meg lay for a few sleepless hours, then rose and attended the Christmas service in the castle chapel, wondering a little that she saw and heard nothing of Lord Marlowe. She would not speak of him to Dame Kate, still less to Alice Tilney, and it was in silence and with long faces that they both waited upon her. If the truth were told, while the old woman was angry and anxious, Alice was afraid.

When at last Margaret was called to her grandfather, she told them both to stay behind, and went into his room alone. Now the cold white light of the snow was streaming in, but the glory of the evening before was all gone; a fresh fall had covered streets and fields inches thick. Sir William stared gloomily at the crackling fire, and his Christmas welcome to the child of his heart seemed weighted with the heavy chill of the day.

She knelt and asked for his blessing: he gave it absently, lifelessly; and then she sat on a stool at his feet

and looked up into the kind old eyes that gazed strangely upon her. "Does he know?" the girl said to herself. "Have the mischievous wretches told him? Could they not leave it to me? Have I ever deceived him, and will Harry make me begin now?"

But one might very courageously ask one's self these questions, and yet find it difficult to brave Sir William's fierce anger, if he had resolved to send Lord Marlowe away rejected. Meg waited for what her grandfather might say. The old face softened as it bent towards her, though a certain sadness and bewilderment remained.

"Ay, to be sure! My pretty Meg has come for her Christmas-box," Sir William muttered; and the girl said to herself, with a touch of dismay in spite of all, "No, they have not told him,—and I must."

"There is only one Christmas-box I want, Grandfather," she said hurriedly, as the old man stretched out his thin hand, on which the veins stood out like cords, to take a box of Eastern wood from the table near him. "Give me nothing else, pray,—" for he hesitated, looking at her, but with no sign of anger, so that she went on boldly, though her beating heart sent the red blood flying into her face. "I mean, if you will not give me that,—that which I want—all other gifts are nothing, for the convent will be the one home for me.

Grandfather, listen, wait and listen ; may I choose my husband !”

Sir William did not answer instantly, but his look became heavier under Meg's imploring gaze. Without a word he took the box, opened it, and lifted out of their velvet nest several strings of large and most beautiful pearls. With their rich creamy lustre, which seemed to suggest a world of colour more wonderful than that of rubies and emeralds, they glowed in the grey and chilly room. Sir William flung them round Margaret's neck, tenderly touching her brown hair.

“These are yours, pearl of pearls,” he said. “They were your mother's before you. As to husbands, what do you know of them ? Leave such choice to your elders, pretty one.”

Meg took the old hand and laid her cheek against it, while she caressed the jewels that so well became her white neck. “If your choice agrees with mine, Grandfather,” she said. “Tell me, of your goodness, what will you say to him !”

“What ? To Harry Marlowe ?”

There was a touch of threatening, almost a growl, in the old man's voice. Meg only answered by slightly turning her soft cheek and touching his hand with her lips.

“'Tis this Marlowe you want for a husband ?”

The reply was the same.

“Now may Our Lady and all the Saints teach me what I ought to do, for I shall soon be as mad as Harry himself,” said Sir William, and he trembled as he spoke. “Meg, my lass, I was warned weeks ago to have nothing to do with this man. I would not believe Sir Thomas, when he told me 'twas common knowledge he was crazy. I left his name in my will as executor, — right or wrong, the Lord knows ; but when I wrote on your affairs to my Lady

his step-mother how should I know she would send him, as he says she did, to ask you in marriage !”

“What could she do better !” said Margaret. “What fault have you to find with him, Grandfather !”

“Fault ! What fault ? Why, that he is crazy ! Is the lass so blind as not to see that ? Cupid has bandaged your pretty eyes, truly. A handsome man, I grant, but old enough to be your father, and with the queerest fashions of his own. To see him burn those letters, — now why, I ask you, should he burn them at all ? It was a mighty strange thing to do. 'Fore God, I never saw a crazier thing. Tony finds a way to explain that, but I don't like it any better. 'Tis a choice between craft and craziness, it seems to me ; and I shall not give my Meg to a crafty man or to a crazy one.”

“But you will give her to Harry Marlowe,” said Meg, very low. “You will give her to him as he asks you, this very day ; and she will ride north with him to serve the Queen, her godmother.”

“Why, on my faith, madness is catching, it seems !” the old man said, and fairly laughed. He put his fingers under her chin, and turned up her face to his. It was blushing and proud, the white teeth just showing in a defiant smile, the lovely brown eyes full of fire. It was the face of a woman desperately in love, who meant to have her own way. To such a face, the will of an old grandfather was likely to signify little. “You have set your fancy on this man !” Sir William said, growing grave again as he looked at her.

“My fancy ! — nay, my heart and soul !” she answered him. Then she added, “It is because they cannot understand him that they call him crazy.”

"Tony finds him not so hard to understand, yet he makes me like him none the better."

"Tony! What has Tony to do with him?" the girl said scornfully. "Cannot you then believe me, the only one who truly knows him?"

"And how, my fair mistress, do you know him better than your elders do?"

"Because I talked with him in the street as we came back from midnight mass, Grandfather."

"You talked with him in the street!" A cloud of anger was gathering on the old man's brow, his eyes were darkening before the storm. "Where was your nurse, — Alice Tilney,—the men who attended you?"

"I left them. I went with Harry aside into Ditch Lane, and we,—we talked with each other."

Sir William swore an oath which half choked him, and tried to rise, pushing the girl from him, but she clung to his knees. He wrenched himself away from her, made a few faltering steps and leaned upon the table. "Where are they all?" he cried. "They shall be put in the dungeon, every one of them! Giles and John deserve hanging! I'll send home Mistress Alice to King's Hall, —I should have done it long ago. As to old Kate, she may beg her bread on the roads, for I will have her here no longer. What, cannot my grandchild walk safely through my own streets? 'Fore God, 'tis time I was dead! but how will things be bettered then? Alas, my sons dead before me, how can the house fail to fall into ruin? Where is Marlowe,—villain more than madman—thou hadst it, Tony! Ditch Lane at night! fine doings for a gentlewoman! By heaven, were it for her misery, as it will be, he shall marry her now,—and with my curse! Nay, old fool, no such haste—"

His wandering eyes fell on Meg, still kneeling by his chair, and in that noble young face he saw no shame or tragedy, but only distress at his anger, unmixed with fear. The girl's look was so high, so innocent, that a sudden change came over his erratic spirit. From almost weeping with rage, he broke into a nervous laugh, and cried out: "Thou naughty lass, why frighten the old grandfather so? But mark my words, no more walking in dark lanes with my Lord Marlowe or any other lord,—and those who were with you shall have a trouncing. He talked with you,—what did he say to you? Some of it I can guess, more's the pity."

Meg did not answer at once. She rose to her feet, came to her grandfather and linked her arm in his. Leaning heavily on her, he hobbled back and sank into his chair once more. She stood near him, tall and wonderfully beautiful, the Venetian pearls gleaming on her neck: she might have stepped straight, in her young majesty, out from some ancestral palace that mirrored itself in the great canal.

"What did he say?" the old man repeated. "That my lass was fit to be a queen? Ay, we know that. But in his own doings there seems some mystery. Is my Lady of one mind with him, or is this a mad fancy of the moment, as Tony thinks? He talks of hesitations, of whispers,—I know not what; he asks, why burn the letters, if they were the authority for his suit? He talks—"

"Oh, what is Tony to him or to me!" Margaret said impatiently, his own quick spirit mounting in her face. "Send for him,—speak to him face to face."

"Faith, and so I will," Sir William cried. "Tony, art there lad?"

Margaret started slightly and looked

round. The Italian glided out from a shadow behind the window, where the heavy curtains made an even deeper gloom. He had been sitting at a table, with a parchment before him, bending over it, so apparently absorbed, so utterly still, that no one would have guessed his presence there. He came with a laugh on his lips, which died away as he was touched with the haughty anger of Margaret's eyes. So he had been there, eaves-dropping! he had heard all she said to her grandfather, and the thoughtless old man had not cared enough for her dignity to warn her. Yet it did not much matter; she was ashamed of nothing she had said.

Antonio's face changed as their eyes met; he turned a little pale, with an imploring look, as he passed her to stand before Sir William.

"Why did not you speak?" she said sharply, but very low.

"Was my speech needed?" he murmured in answer.

"Yes, to explain your odious thoughts," said Meg, and she stamped her foot on the floor.

Antonio came a step nearer, bent on one knee, took the hem of her gown and put his lips to it; then he looked up straight into her eyes. "You blame your old playfellow!" he said. "And if I am right, fair lady, what am I doing? Only paying tribute to a charm that drives men to strange expedients; at least, so is my fancy."

"Come, Tony," cried Sir William, "make your peace another day. Go now to my Lord Marlowe and ask his presence here."

The Italian sprang up and left the room without another word.

Meg looked uneasily at her grandfather; it was on her lips to complain of this betrayal, to ask why he had allowed her to suppose them alone, to pour out her heart to him in the presence of Antonio. But the

weak flush on the old, agitated face seemed to silence her. It was only Antonio, after all, once the kind, clever playfellow, with whose Southern nature, low-born as he was, she felt a sort of kinship in this cold England, her father's country. There had been a time, not so long ago, when, as growing boy and little girl, the two had been inseparable. Now, since Alice Tilney had come, it was different. Antonio, her grandfather's servant and secretary, was no longer her brother and companion. He often made her angry now, and she despised him for certain of his ways; neither did she quite trust him. The somewhat fawning manners of the man, his watchful eyes, his curious smile,—all this was an unpleasant change from the devoted, sweet-tempered boy of former years. His very beauty, when she looked at him now, was disturbing, repulsive. But these feelings had been of the vaguest, developing without her knowledge as time went on, devoid of any consequence,—for what was he to her?—till this Christmas Day woke them to activity. How dared this Tonio interpose his slim presence, his cunning explanations, between herself and Harry and her grandfather!

As she moved away to the window and stood there, looking down on the white deserted bridge, where fresh snow had covered up the footprints of the night and early morning, she was conscious of a great anger against Antonio, and it poisoned even the joyful memory of the evening before,—the golden world, and Harry Marlowe riding in, weary till he reposed in the welcome of her eyes. Then she said to herself: "Why am I uneasy? The wretch Tonio has guessed something of the truth, but what signifies that? Harry, if he will, can tell my grandfather all he has told me, and we three can settle

the matter without interlopers. If I have to drive him out myself, Tonio shall not be here. Strange, that Harry does not come! How long, how long, my lord, my love! where are you?"

It seemed as if an hour might have gone by. Sir William closed his eyes, half dozing in his chair. The fire blazed up and lit the shadowy corners of the room. From the snowy fields beyond the river anyone looking up would have seen Margaret's figure standing in the window, dark against the cheerful glow. At last in her impatience she turned, stepped down upon the floor, and paced up and down with her eyes upon the door, the pearls shining softly as she moved. Once or twice she stopped and said,—"But where is he? Why does he not come?" and then she walked up to the door as if to open it, hesitated, turned back and looked at her grandfather. "I will not anger him again, he is too weak," she said. "But oh, how can I wait longer!"

At last a quick step sprang up the stairs, a hand was on the door. Margaret paused in her walk, pressed her fingers to her heart for a moment, and stood quite still near her grandfather. She knew it was not Harry Marlowe.

Antonio opened the door without noise, and glided into the room. He gave her one glance, a very strange one; she thought afterwards that it spoke of both terror and triumph. Then he went up to Sir William and knelt down beside him, so that their faces were on a level. Margaret looked from one to the other.

"I have unexpected news," he said; "'tis a mystery that no one can explain. Lord Marlowe is gone. It seems that he went north on foot very early this morning, when most of us were sleeping after the midnight mass. No one even saw him leave

the castle, and he must have gone with some country people through the town gate. His men followed him two hours later. A gentleman came to Ralph the guard, who had charge of the west buildings where they slept, and brought a message from my Lord that they were to break their fast quickly and follow him on the north road bringing his horse with them. They went while the town was still asleep; only a few saw them go."

Sir William stared wildly, still but half awake. Margaret stood like a stone, till she met the upward glance of Antonio's eyes. Her whole nature rose against that look of his. She threw out both hands, crying suddenly, "It is false! He is not gone!"

Antonio looked down, his beautiful mouth curving softly into a smile. "I am a miserable man, to bring you such tidings," he said; "but it is truth, dear mistress!"

"I do not believe it," Meg repeated. "His men gone, you say? A gentleman with a message? What gentleman? Who brought them the message?"

"Ay, ay, Tony, who brought the message?" Sir William asked fiercely.

He had suddenly awoke to his full senses. With a hasty movement he seemed to spurn the young man from him, so that Antonio, springing to his feet with an angry flush, stood back a pace or two. Sir William put out his right hand and caught Margaret's left as she drew a little nearer to him.

"I cannot tell, Sir. Ralph did not know him," Antonio answered.

"Go, fetch Ralph, and come back here."

"What has happened, Grandfather? What will you do?" Margaret said trembling. "Oh, there is some villainy abroad. I fear,—I fear—"

"My poor Meg, I fear you must be convinced against your will," the old man said tenderly, caressing the hand he held. "Are not these the doings of a madman? One day he arrives, he asks for your hand, in so strange a fashion that those who love you are driven to believe that there is truth in the stories they hear of him. Then,—what man in his senses, if he desired,—most unreasonably—to speak with you alone, would not have found a better place than Ditch Lane, a more seemly hour than one of the morning? And now,—to leave the town on foot, alone, over the moorland in the snow, without farewell to you or me, without my answer to his suit,—a message to his men to follow him northwards! If the man be not crazy, what is he, Meg?" The girl stood silent. After a moment Sir William went on: "I see it all, Meg. He is either crazy or wicked. Hark to what Tony thinks, what he warned me of last night. Nay, start not away so; Tony has a quick brain, and loves thee and me. When my Lord came into this room and set his eyes on you, Tony heard him say,—to himself, as it were—'Too good for the Popinjay!' Ah, but hark a moment longer. When he began to ask for you in marriage, in his strange sudden way, Tony is sure that it was for his brother, not himself, he was speaking. But 'twas Tony who put his real thought into a word for him. 'Yourself, my Lord!' quoth Tony in a whisper,—did you hear him? Marlowe did, and took it up like a parrot or a popinjay. 'Myself!' says he. Talk of popinjays! 'tis the nickname they give Dick his brother, my Lady's son. Poor woman, if she charged Harry to plead his cause, as Tony thinks, she was ill-guided enough. And 'twas a bold and a necessary thing for him to burn her letters. But the man's a knave,

if all this be true, and I suppose this morning he has repented of his knavery, and so gone on his way."

"Ah," Meg said quietly, "it was Tony who whispered? My Lord thought it was I."

"What?" gasped Sir William.

But the girl quickly checked herself. If her grandfather was ready to blame Harry Marlowe for what Antonio, with more than good reason, guessed him to have done, it was not she who would prove it against him. Not a word of his passionate confession should pass her lips.

"All I can tell," she said, low but very positively, "is that Lord Marlowe has sworn I shall be his. And I am his for evermore. He has done us high honour, you and me. He is neither wicked nor crazy. If he be gone,—he is the Queen's man, and some messenger from the Queen must have called him secretly. He will come back, and I will wait for him upon my knees. But I am not sure; I think he is not gone; I think some evil—"

The door opened and Antonio came in, followed by a man-at-arms, whose stupid face was flushed with Christmas cheer. Margaret looked hard into the velvet shadow of Antonio's eyes—was he false or true?—and suddenly she saw her lover's fate there. She made a step with hands outspread, faltered and dropped upon the floor, falling her length, with all her brown hair loose and long, at the feet of these men entering.

Later, when with tears and sobs from old Kate, and stony terror on the face of Alice Tilney, she had been carried away, still as if dead, to her own room, Sir William, his voice and his whole frame shaking, called Antonio to his side.

"Your pen, Tony!" he said. Sit you down and write a letter to my

Lady Marlowe. Ask the meaning of these things,—tell all that has come to pass, and how her mad stepson's doings have well-nigh killed my Margaret."

"Ah, dear Sir, 'tis the shock, she will recover," Antonio said in his softest voice, and smiled with an exquisite tenderness. "Let us wish Queen Margaret joy of her knight,—on his way to her!" he added inaudibly.

CHAPTER V.

THUS every one, except a few persons who knew better, supposed that Lord Marlowe had justified his nick-name that Christmas morning. For certainly it was only a Mad Marlowe who would have started on foot and alone in the dark, in advance of his men, through the wild moorland country, deep in snow, which lay for miles to the north of Ruddiford. The road was little better than a track at the best of times, winding up shoulders of heather-covered hill, between jutting rocks and steep-sided valleys. Wild characters haunted it, swarming out of the caves in its lonelier recesses. Even the traders and carriers, who went that way with their pack-horses, were wont to linger in the shelter of Ruddiford till they were enough in number to attempt the northern road with safety.

What had really happened was this. Instead of starting alone to the north, voluntarily, unaccountably, leaving the girl who had taken him captive with the sweetness of her eyes, the ruddy shining of her hair, and hurrying on to that other woman, royal, unfortunate, who claimed his entire devotion, Harry Marlowe had been dragged southward in unfriendly company.

When he parted with his love, and saw her walk away between the swinging lanterns in charge of her

old nurse and the worthies of Ruddiford, he lingered a few moments in the place where she had stood, and where the air and earth seemed to keep her presence still. With a quick wild movement he stooped and kissed the stones her feet had touched; cold and damp they were, but to him as refreshing as grass in summer.

"For a few hours, a few hours only, my beautiful Meg!" he murmured to himself. "Then comes the climax of this sweet adventure. The old man shall give you to me, for I will take no denial. After all, as the world wags, I'm a better match than Dick, and he has no right to be angry. Now back to quarters,—to sleep, if sleep I may. Ah, Meg, to dream of thee!"

He walked down the lane towards the west gate, near which he and his men were lodged. Strolling carelessly, looking on the ground, with a murmur of loving speeches on his lips, as if the girl who called them forth were in his arms still, he knew nothing of the dark world round him till several men stepped out from an alley and barred his way, while a smoking torch flamed in his eyes and dazzled him.

Before him stood a young man as tall as himself, fair and desperate-looking, with red locks hanging down his cheeks and a drawn sword in his hand. Four or five more young fellows, armed to the teeth, wild and eager of look, crowded up behind this leader. Two more, creeping through the darkness, stole up at Harry's back, so that he was fairly surrounded.

"Surrender, my Lord Marlowe," said the leader of the band. "Give up your sword, or—" he flourished his own.

"Who are you, Sir, who ventures thus to speak to me?" said Harry haughtily. "Plainly you do not

know me. Stand out of my way, with your rascal companions."

There was such a fearless command in his manner that the youth who faced him shrank for a moment and hesitated.

"Jasper," cried one of the others suddenly, "he hath no sword."

It was true. Harry had gone out to the midnight mass with no weapon but a short ornamental dagger, and wearing no defensive armour of any kind, but a velvet jacket and short furred gown and cap. Ever careless, the thought of danger in these little streets of Sir William Roden's town had not so much as occurred to him. He had separated from his men, with the thought of following Mistress Margaret and gaining a word with her. Since then, no thought but of her had even crossed his mind.

"Ah, the insolent Yorkist!" cried Jasper Tilney. "He thinks he is in a land of sheep. He comes in with a fine swagger, takes the fairest of our ladies, and thinks to ride on his way. We are not worth a sword-cut, it seems. Come, my Lord, take mine, and a good blade too. You shall fight for Mistress Roden, or I'll kill you as you stand."

"Jasper, you fool," hissed a voice at his elbow, "why give him the chance of killing you? And we don't want a brawl in the street, here under the walls. Take him,—carry him off,—do what you please when you have him safe away."

The advice came from a slender man in a mask, the only one of the band whose face was hidden.

"Peace, foreigner," said Jasper roughly. "Keep out of the way, there."

As he spoke, he pulled off a glove and threw it in Lord Marlowe's face, then flung his own sword clattering at his feet, and snatched one from the nearest of his followers.

"Yorkist—traitor—we know your lady step-mother is in love with March," he said. "The Queen will be better without such service as yours. Fight,—or be whipped out of the town."

"What does the man mean?" said Harry, with perfect calmness. "Before I kill you, Sir, you will ask pardon for these insults and ribald lies. Have I fallen among a pack of highway robbers?"

"No, you have met a true lover of Mistress Margaret."

The words were loudly whispered, and made Harry start, for he was instantly reminded of the mysterious whisper, *Yourself, my lord*, of the evening before.

"There are demons abroad,—or angels," he muttered. Then, spurning Jasper's sword with his foot, he drew his small dagger and stood on guard. "If you fight like a gentleman, and alone, we are not ill-matched. Six or seven to one is heavy odds; still, I may account for some of you."

At first Harry contented himself with warding off Jasper's blows, which he did with marvellous cleverness and agility, even wounding him slightly in the left wrist, for Jasper was a rash and careless fighter. It is also to be said that he fought half-heartedly, and against the conscience which even this young ruffian had. His sword, his steel-guarded coat, against the dagger of a man dressed in velvet,—it was too like murder to please young Tilney, here a better man than any of his worthless Fellowship. But the prick on his wrist roused him, and also enraged his companions, who saw the blood dripping suddenly. Jasper gave a smothered cry, and aimed a more violent blow at Marlowe, who stepped back to avoid it. He was caught and tripped up from behind; a blow on

the back of his head brought him down senseless, while Jasper, standing over him, swore furiously at his companions.

One pressed forward with the torch, the two who had stolen up behind knelt down by Harry to examine his hurt, and looked up half savagely, half laughing, into the angry face above them. "Twas Tony's doing,—he signed to us," they said, and Jasper turned upon the masked Italian. "What are you doing, you black snake, pushing your false face between gentlemen? Why should we not fight it out as he willed it? He is worth all you crawling cowards put together. Is the man dead, you fellows?"

"Dead, no," said one of them sulkily. "I did but fetch him a clout to quiet him,—and you had best hold your ungrateful tongue, Master Tilney."

"Come, be pacified, we are all at your service," Antonio said softly. "What are your commands? Shall we take him to Master Simon, who will bind up his head and your arm,—or shall we go knock at the castle gate, and carry him in to Sir William and Mistress Margaret? Then you may have a good chance of acting witness at the marriage, if it be this day, as my Lord demanded, and they will scarce refuse him now. Patience, Master Jasper," he added, as the young man glared at him; "'tis pity to quarrel with your best friends. This fight of yours could not have lasted long, here under the walls; some of the men would have looked out, and spoilt your game quickly. You should thank me for stopping your foolishness."

"What are we to do with him? Leave him here?" growled Jasper.

"If you wish the wedding to come off, leave him here by all means," Antonio answered, and smiled.

"There,—out with the torch,—take him up, two of you, carry him down to your horses, and away with you. You have ridden with a dead man before now, and he is but a stunned one."

"Ay, but, Tony—Sir William, and she, will wonder that he is gone. What story—"

"Leave that to me; only keep him out of her way. This Yorkist,—as you were pleased in your wisdom to call him—he is the Queen's man, her special favourite, and who will wonder if his first mistress has called him away from this new fancy?"

The young men did as they were advised. Antonio, his eyes gleaming through his mask, watched the group, as carrying the long form of Harry it stole between the drifts of snow. "If my suspicions are right, my Lord," he muttered, "they might drop you into the castle ditch and leave you there; not many of your own would mourn you."

Harry Marlowe woke to deadly sickness and throbbing pain, with a discomfort so terrible that he, who knew what it was to bear wounds patiently, groaned aloud in spite of himself.

He was tied on a horse which was trotting roughly along an uneven track, his head hanging down, striking each moment against the animal's shoulder, and so tightly bound as to be incapable of moving or raising himself. It was still dark, except from the glimmer of the snow. Up and down hill, it seemed, his captors carried him, at the same dreadful jogging pace. His head was bursting, his heart thumping violently. He was conscious that horses were tramping behind and before; he could hear the creak of leather and the rattle of bridles, the crunching tread of many hoofs upon

the snow. Now and then a few words or a laugh passed among the troop that surrounded him, but on the whole this Christmas gambol of theirs was soberly gone through. A man was running at his horse's head, breathing hard, swearing sometimes and hurrying the beast on. Now and then a rough hand tried the cords and straps that fastened the prisoner. When Harry groaned for the second or third time, this man gave him a pull which jarred every nerve and muscle in his body, and panted as he ran,—“Here, Jasper, my Lord's crying out. Must we silence him again?”

“Alive, is he?” said Jasper Tilney from the front of the troop. “Nay, let him alone, let him cry. We shall be home in ten minutes.”

“He won't live so long,” said another, riding on the off side. “His head's got twisted, he's now choking. Best see to him, if you want him alive at King's Hall.”

Another carelessly remarked: “What use is the long-legged brute to you, Jasper? Let him die a natural death, and drop him in old Curley's ditch,—food for the crows, and less trouble for you.”

“Poor old Curley, when he finds him in the morning! A text for the Christmas sermon,” laughed another.

The whole troop, following its leader, halted suddenly, and Jasper Tilney threw himself off his horse. “You are a set of devils,” he said to them. “I won't have the man die; he is a brave fellow. Give me a knife; cut these cords, and set him on his feet.”

But this was easier said than done, for Harry, his limbs stiff and cramped from the tying, his head dizzy and reeling with pain, staggered and fell in the snow by the roadside.

“Water!” was the only word he said.

“Here's water enough,” muttered Jasper.

While his comrades looked on, some laughing, some discontented, he took a handful of snow, pressed some into Harry's mouth, and rubbed the rest over his brow and temples. In a few minutes the prisoner looked up with intelligence in his eyes. “Help me to my feet; I can walk or ride now,” he said, and stretched out his hand to Jasper, who stared at him curiously.

Most men would have felt the degradation of such a state. To have been knocked down from behind, tied to a horse like a criminal, carried off a helpless captive, and now to be dependent for acts of the commonest humanity on a rival and an enemy, who had insulted him and done his best to kill him,—it was enough to burden a man with misery and shame. But Mad Marlowe was not made of ordinary stuff; he was too stately to be touched by shame. “Give me your hand,” he said imperiously, and Jasper Tilney, staring hard and with a slow, involuntary movement, obeyed him.

Lord Marlowe stood upright, the men and horses thronging round. One had lighted a horn lanthorn, which did little more than give form and consistency to the shadows of that dreary winter dawn. The waste of fields stretched away, pale and dim, a few great trees, a clump of thorn or holly, just visible here and there against the snow-laden sky. The road, such as it was, seemed to lead on southward; but the troop, when they stopped to release him, were about to turn into a rough track across a broad field to the west, barred a mile or two away by a black barrier of forest.

“Where are you leading me, Sirs?” Harry asked with effort; then he laid a hand on Jasper's shoulder and leaned upon him, which character-

istic movement brought a grin to the coarser faces round these two.

"Now fight it out, Sirs," said one of the men. "Remember, my Lord, Master Tilney spoke ill of my Lady your mother, and called you all a pack of Yorkists. If you are a good Lancastrian, you owe him a buffet for that."

"And he shall not have it from behind," Harry said, with perfect coolness, while the fellow who had struck him growled angrily. "Listen, Master Tilney, whoever you may be," he said to Jasper. "I still owe you a buffet, your friends say; but I have paid something. I fetched blood from your left arm, did I not? Yes, you have bound it with a kerchief."

"And he would 'twere Mistress Meg's, but 'tis not,—not yet, that's to come," said one of the band.

"Now learn a lesson," Lord Marlowe said, and turned to face them, still supporting himself by Jasper's shoulder, "you English Fellowship,—I would gladly speak to you as gentlemen, but never will I, so long as you bandy the names of ladies in your common talk—'tis the lowest manners of rascaldom,—Master Tilney, you at least should know better. I touched you with my dagger-point, did I not? Answer."

"'Twas nothing but a scratch," Jasper growled hoarsely.

"Still, I did touch you. And you, or your friends, have hurt me so that I can scarce stand. Ay, we will fight it out one of these days, when I am myself again,—if I find you are worthy to fight me. But now,—what is this foolish game of carrying me off? What do you want of me? My money is with my men at Ruddiford; I am on my way to join her Highness the Queen; sooner than hinder me, you should ride with me to the north. Give me a horse now, and guide me back, one of you, to my men."

Jasper shook off his hand, and laughed fiercely. A chorus of angry laughter echoed his. "What do we care, my Lord," he said, "where you and your men and your money are going? If you were a Yorkist, I'd punish you with greater pleasure, but I don't love you the better because you are the Queen's man. We care little for parties, nor are we thieves, I and my Fellowship here. You are insolent, my Lord, and I'd have you know you are speaking to gentlemen of the best blood in the Midlands."

"You amaze me, Sir," said Harry, bowing slightly to the company. "Then,—let me understand,—what is it you want of me?"

Jasper stared him in the face. His wild blue eyes, his flushed, daring face, made him look by far the maddest of the two. "I want to—I swear to—hinder you from wedding Margaret Roden," he said between his teeth.

"Ah,—that, my fine fellow, you cannot do," said Harry, and smiled.

"Cannot I? We will see to that, my Lord. Come now, to prove I'm a gentleman, I'll trust to your oath. Swear to me, on the cross of this dagger, that you will never marry her, that you will ride north without seeing her again, and I will put you on my own horse and let you go your way,—ay, though every one of my comrades say me nay."

"We will not say you nay, Jasper," said the eldest and grimmest of the band. "We shall gladly be rid of his Lordship, but Brown Bob is worth keeping; we'll find him a worse horse."

"I have spoken, Leonard," Jasper Tilney replied. "Now, my Lord, what say you?"

Harry Marlowe laughed lightly. "You expect me to swear that?" he said. "I will swear nothing, promise nothing; so much I'll swear, on your

dagger's hilt or on any holy relic you may put before me."

"You value your life little, then."

"What is life? the power to eat and drink? You take my life, if you take what I live for."

He stood pale and immovable, facing Jasper Tilney, who hesitated, staring at him. In spite of the impatient growls of his companions, tired of lingering in the snow, he could do no more than threaten Harry. Strike him down in cold blood, unarmed and exhausted, though it were the surest way of disposing of a dangerous rival, he could not.

"That is your answer? You will repent," he said fiercely. "Here, tie him to my saddle. He shall run beside me to King's Hall."

"Good! Brown Bob is tired of standing,—he'll stretch his legs for him," said Leonard.

Luckily for Harry Marlowe, the going was very heavy and the distance very short. Jasper did not press his horse forward. The whole band plunged steadily on through the fresh snow, which balled so much that one or the other had to be constantly dismounting. Across wide desolate fields they came to a few miserable hovels crouching round a green, and from this a short steep hill led to a square-towered church in a churchyard bordered with snow-laden fir-trees. Beyond this were the high gables of a large house, entered by an archway with heavy gates and portcullis, and a walled courtyard with broad steps to the principal door. A faint misty dawn, spreading over that wintry world, showed all this plainly to Harry Marlowe's aching eyes.

As he strode wearily beside Jasper's horse, impatient now to reach his stable, and as they passed under the churchyard wall in the lane that led to the house, the white shaggy head of an old priest appeared over the wall.

"Merry Christmas to you, Jasper, and all my sons!" cried a shrill voice, something like the crowing of a cock in the icy morning air.

"Merry Christmas, father!" they cried in chorus.

"What brings you home so late, or so early? I have waited for you,—I feared, forsooth, to have no congregation. Hey, what prisoner have you there?"

"Oh, a fine prisoner, a guest of mine for the nonce," Jasper answered with a careless air. "Set your bells ringing, father. I thought we should have heard them half-an-hour since."

"Ay, ay," cried the old man, his dim, foolish, but anxious eyes fixed on the strange figure at Jasper's side. Then he turned away muttering, "I waited, lads, I waited for you," and then, as the party rode on, they heard him shouting: "Robin, Dickon, Tom, where be you all? Strike up the bells, men; here be Master Tilney and his worshipful Fellowship."

A few minutes more, and the old tower quivered with the jolly Christmas peal; the ringers of King's Hall were famed in all the country round.

The young squire led the way into his house, through a confusion of barking dogs, hurrying women and boys, under branches of holly, ivy, and mistletoe, while a wandering harper played in the hall, and a smell of roast beef and spiced ale filled all the air.

The clashing and clanging of the bells, the great blazing fires, the laughing faces of the people, all spoke tidings of comfort and joy. Jasper turned to his prisoner, who stood silent, with bound hands, in the middle of the floor. Pale and proud, in spite of all the king of his company, Harry Marlowe waited for his fate. Jasper Tilney was angrily conscious of quailing under those dark eyes of his. "Hear you, my Lord!" he said,

with an attempt at a laugh. "They are ringing you a welcome to King's Hall."

"Nay, the welcome is not for me, Harry answered.

"I am not a brigand or a murderer. You shall have time to think, and a chance of saving your life."

Lord Marlowe lifted his brows and said nothing.

Jasper scowled upon him for a moment, then took a bunch of heavy keys from a nail, and saying, "Follow me," led the way up the broad staircase of oak logs that ascended from the hall.

The Fellowship looked after the two men till they disappeared, then put their heads together, crafty or daredevil, as the case might be.

"Did you hear my Lord boast of his men and his money? I wager he is carrying sacks of treasure to the Queen. It will never reach her now,—why not share it? The west gate is poorly guarded, and the men may be snoring still."

"Why, they are twenty mile off by now. Was not Tony to cheat them into starting after their master on the north road?"

"Nay,—was he?"

"Surely, I heard him mutter a word in Jasper's ear. So it would take better legs than ours to catch them."

"Lazy lout!" Leonard said scornfully.

He was a big, violent fellow, towering over the others, and though inferior to them in birth and fortune, often inclined to dispute Jasper Tilney's leadership.

"Such words to me!" the other young fellow stormed, but his comrades interfered to stop the quarrel.

"Who will ride with me," said Leonard, looking round, "to catch these fellows on the north road?"

"Without mass or breakfast,—

and Doctor Curley, what will he say?"

"Let him say what he will; he knows he has not lambs to deal with. As to breakfast, we'll take that quickly,—and then away. No word to Jasper,—he can guard his precious prisoner. Look you, there are but few of these men, and they will not ride far. They will find no master on the road, and they will be back at Ruddiford while the day is still young. We will catch them outside the north gate. No need to go through the town,—we'll get across on the ice—'tis rough and snowy. Come,—who is for my Lord Marlowe's money-bags? They're better worth having than himself, whatever Jasper may say."

CHAPTER VI.

SWANLEA was one of the strangest and most beautiful houses in England at that day. It stood low down, flat on a meadow, and the hills rose about it, covered with forests of beech and fir. Round about it, back and front, a little river twirled and ran; a stream, though not the same, namesake and likeness of "my Lady Lea." To the south of the house, about which elms and cedars were grouped in stately fashion, this small river spread itself into a natural lake with an island in it, on which ivy and wild trees were now fast hiding the sturdy remains of a fortress much older than the present dwelling of the barons of Marlowe. This had once been a strong little place, defended by water and bridge and wall, though commanded by the hills all round.

It was the father of Harry, a man of large fortune and fine taste, a friend and companion of the Duke of Bedford, and thus touched by French taste and Renaissance fancy, who had dismantled the little castle on the

island and had built the large, luxurious house which now nestled so confidently in the valley of the Lea. It would seem that he had not expected any war, foreign or civil, to disturb his repose there, for never was there a house more difficult to defend. But this former Harry, Sir William Roden's old friend and brother-in-arms,—though the men were most unlike—did not live to see England torn in the strife of the Red and White Roses. He died in peace at Swanlea, not very long after his second marriage with the Lady Isabel, whose tastes were even more modern than his own and her freedom of thought very much wider.

He left two sons only—Harry, a youth of seventeen, and Richard, a child in leading-strings. These two were as different as their mothers before them. The first Baroness was a woman of the old world, of the Middle Ages now passing away. She gave largely to the poor; she scourged herself and wore hair-cloth next her skin. She was a saint, but also a devoted wife and mother, though her life may have been shortened by anxiety for her husband's and her son's salvation. She was carried up the steep path to the vault in the old church on the hill, the path worn by her feet in pilgrimage, to grow mossy and deserted when she was gone. On her altar-tomb, the marble face looked up to heaven as if to say, "How long, O Lord?" while all the influences she hated reigned in her stead at Swanlea.

The house was very fantastic, crowded with towers and turrets: it was easy to see that its inspiration came from the Palais des Tournelles at Paris, where the Duke of Bedford had his quarters when he ruled there. Inside it was beautifully panelled in wood, or hung with rare tapestries and curtains; there was a fine library,

for both Lord Marlowe and his son and successor loved learning, like the best men of their day. Outside, the formal gardens were divided by high hedges of box and yew, cut here and there into quaint shapes of birds and animals; live peacocks too, in summer, strutted on the lawns, and swans floated on the lake.

A crowd of well-trained servants made life run easily at Swanlea, and the house was furnished with every luxury of the time. Isabel Lady Marlowe held a kind of little court there, and with a keen eye for the winning side she secretly kept the friendship of the Duke of York and his attractive son, while her step-son, with men and money, devoted himself to the cause of Lancaster. Still, owing to her cleverness and his generosity, they did not quarrel. With Harry his father's wife, though out of sympathy with him, held the place of his mother, and though lord and master at Swanlea, he used his authority so little, lived so simply, and was so constantly away in attendance on his Queen, that it seemed as if the beautiful place were Lady Marlowe's to use as she pleased. For this liberality she repaid him by whispering that his eccentricity, which was undoubted, at times amounted to madness, and so the slander, encouraged by his own wild and careless ways, took form in the names by which half London and all the Duke of York's party knew him,—Mad Marlowe, the Queen's man.

The Lady Isabel, as they called her, was sitting in a small, high, beautiful room, lined with carved shelves of richly bound manuscripts. She sat at a desk, with letters spread out before her. The winter sunlight glimmered in through tall painted windows, and the burning logs on the hearth gave out a pleasant smell. Two greyhounds, with silver collars,

lay on velvet cushions before the fire, and between them, on a larger cushion, lounged my Lady's son Richard, a young fellow of twenty, with a mass of curled yellow hair and a face touched up with paint. He yawned often, and touched a few notes on his lute; now and then he lifted large lazy eyes and looked at his mother.

With her there was no idleness, no personal luxury. Her black velvet gown fell in stately folds; her pale face, still beautiful, for she was further from fifty than Sir William Roden thought, was grave and marked by care. It was a curious face, with much brightness but no sweetness; sometimes stony in hardness and coldness, sometimes moved to smiles and laughter which were not always found reassuring by persons in her power. Sir William, in his blind confidence, knew almost nothing of the woman to whom he had been ready to entrust his dear grandchild's future. He took the Lady Isabel on faith, as being all that his friend Marlowe's wife ought to be. He had only seen her once in his life, and that was before her husband's death, many years ago. In those days, indeed, Isabel Marlowe seemed to be a model of all womanly virtues, and a man would have taken his oath at any time, that she was what she chose to appear.

She read those letters again and again. She had read them, at intervals, for the last twenty-four hours, ever since they reached her from the fatal field where Queen Margaret had been victorious and had triumphed cruelly over Richard of York in his death. Outwardly, the traditions of the house of Marlowe obliged the Baroness to regard the news of Wakefield as good news; inwardly, it was an unwelcome check to her ambitions for herself and Richard her son.

A personal friendship and mutual understanding with Edward Earl of March was not entirely the result of that fascination which women seldom resisted, and which it had amused him to exert on her, the mother of the strongest of Lancastrians. Isabel would have laughed at the notion that she could be attracted by any man to her political undoing. Convinced that the future lay with the White Rose, she had a perfect scorn for Henry the Sixth, and a perfect hatred for Margaret of Anjou.

Some little curiosity found its way into the soft indifferent eyes of Richard, who seldom tried to understand his mother, and was still more seldom allowed to do so. She kept him in lazy luxury, childish and ignorant. Feigning to approve of the boy's half-conscious love and admiration for his step-brother, she never encouraged him to seek Harry's society. When Lord Marlowe was at Swansea, some excuse was generally found to keep Dick out of his way. Hunting and hawking and all the other manly sports were frowned upon; when the lad, supposed to be delicate and frail, escaped to join in them, less from any love of them than from the wish to gain Harry's good opinion, it was generally at the cost of his mother's displeasure. Men laughed at the weak, gaily-dressed fellow, and called him Popinjay. Even Harry's kindness was not always proof against a certain scorn for him, though he guessed at better qualities beneath. He had been ready to enter into the plan suggested by my Lady after she received Sir William Roden's first letter, of marrying Dick to the heiress of Ruddiford. Welcoming anything that might make a man of poor Dick, this country girl, thrown by her old grandfather into his mother's arms, seemed the very wife for him. A good Lancastrian

connection, too, it would serve to steady my Lady on the right side, Harry thought, having little idea how far his step-mother's Yorkist leanings carried her. That she admired and believed in the Duke of York, he knew; but so did others who yet kept a dutiful loyalty to King Henry.

Lord Marlowe, as we know, had reckoned without the personality of Mistress Margaret Roden. But no news of him or his mission had reached Swanlea since he and his men rode away up the valley northward, a few days before Christmas; and it was now January.

"My Lady Mother," said young Richard, softly, "you pull a long face over this Wakefield battle and the death of the Duke, but is the news truly good or bad? Will it not bring the war to an end and set the King free to reign?"

"It may, Richard," said his mother. "But think you what that means,—the reign of a man of diseased brain, and the rule of a woman bloody, fierce, and cruel, who will treat all suspected of favouring York as she has treated the Duke himself and my Lord Salisbury and many more. My head and thine, Dick, may fall one day"—she smiled at him, and drew a pointed finger across her throat. "I have enemies enough,—there are slanders enough abroad,—what do you say?"

"I say, we Marlowes wear the Red Rose, and Harry gave me the Prince's silver badge for my cap, Mother. I care little for parties; still, why should I lose my head for the colour of a flower?"

"You care nothing and know nothing, silly Popinjay," said Isabel. "'Tis waste of time to talk to thee"; and again she bent over the papers on her desk.

A cloud of sulky anger darkened the boy's handsome face. He leaped

up from his cushion, dashed his lute on the floor so violently as to break it, and stalked across the room to her, while the dogs lifted their heads, and one growled low. Richard turned and looked at him.

"I will have that dog killed; he hates me," he said. "All the rest love me, but that pampered beast of yours—"

"Ah, I have more than one pampered beast in my kennels," said Lady Marlowe. "When they begin to kill each other, the chaos will be too great. Why this flame of fury, Dick? What have you to say to me?"

"Why do you treat me so, Mother? I know more than you think. I am not a child, not even a boy, remember. I am a man. I shall be married soon, and lord of a castle."

"You know so much as that?" she said thoughtfully. "Yes, 'twas a lucky thought, that marriage for you. That ancient place Ruddiford, with its old master and his traditions of Agincourt, all that may save your head and mine, Dick, in case this battle means real victory for the House of Lancaster. Queen Margaret may hear what she will, but I should be safe, I think,—Marlowe on one side, you and your Rodens on the other. Yes,—and in the other case, 'tis a strong position, worth much to either side; in a certain way 'tis the key to the north, though neither side has armed it, for I think the old knight must be well-nigh in his dotage. Something might be done, and if he were out of the way—"

"Are you talking of Ruddiford, my Lady," Richard asked, frowning in impatient bewilderment as he stood before the desk over which she was bending.

She started slightly, and looked up with staring eyes, for he had broken in on a sudden train of thought

which was carrying her far. "Go back to your dogs and your music, Dick," she said. "Wait patiently. Your brother will send a messenger to tell us how his suit for you has sped. He has been long on the road, I fancy; he should be here now."

Even as she spoke, there were sounds outside. A servant darted into the room: "A messenger from Sir William Roden."

Lady Marlowe looked up, startled; this was not exactly what she expected, but she was not ill pleased. "Send the man in," she said. "So, Dick,"—when they were alone for a moment—"Ruddiford is at your feet, it seems. Harry has done his work well."

The boy laughed consciously, at once good-humoured again. He pushed a white hand through his curls, moved back towards the fire and threw himself into a chair, so that the messenger, coming in, should face both himself and his mother. This the messenger did, greeting them both with profound bows. They saw at once that Sir William had not sent an ordinary servant to carry his mind to Lady Marlowe, but a person of confidence, a person in whose air there was even something of the gentleman; so much the more complimentary. Richard smiled and blushed in spite of himself, at this important moment, and then tried hard to look dignified. Lady Marlowe, upright in her chair, met the messenger with a full, keen gaze from dark eyes that were wont to see through men. She was very pale and her lips, slightly parted, showed strong white teeth. He would be a bold man who tried to deceive such a woman. Yet now, if ever, the Lady Isabel met her match, and she instantly felt it. The young man who entered might be a menial by position, though his plain riding-dress bore no sign of this, but

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he was beautiful and clever beyond the range of ordinary men. The truth was that Sir William, more and more perplexed by the strange turn events had taken, had decided at last on sending his precious Antonio with the letter he had written to tell Lady Marlowe all, and to ask, on his side, for an explanation.

So now Tony found himself on his knees beside her Ladyship. After a moment's delay,—what kind of man was this?—she gave him her white hand to kiss. It seemed, certainly, that he had been brought up as a gentleman, and, one must confess, among all the handsome young men who had ever courted my Lady in her varied experience, he took easily the first place. Nor was she by any means above making him aware of her admiration. In Dick's presence, however, there was no lapse from her Ladyship's dignity.

As the young man stood up and waited for her to speak, she said very courteously, "Favour us with your name, Sir."

"Antonio Ferrari, your Ladyship's humble servant. I am Sir William Roden's secretary."

"An Italian—of noble birth, Sir?"

Antonio flushed with pleasure, but answered very meekly: "No, Madam; but I was brought to England by Master John Roden as his page, and it has been my privilege to wait upon Mistress Margaret."

"As her page?"

"Her page, and playfellow, till Sir William took me specially into his service."

"Where, I suppose, you will remain?"

"Surely, Madam, unless my young mistress, when she comes hither as Baroness Marlowe, should command me to follow her."

Antonio spoke with such quiet

correctness that Lady Marlowe, occupied for the moment with himself, noticed nothing strange in his words. But young Richard was in a different case. The manner and the looks of Antonio had quite a contrary effect on his mother and on him. He disliked him from the first, thought him a presumptuous ape, and swore to himself that his wife should be attended by no such playfellows. He marvelled at the gentleness of his mother's manner to a foreign secretary fellow of no birth,—who, by the way, talked egregious nonsense when he was not telling her his own unnecessary history.

"You lie, fellow," Dick said coolly. "Have a care, Madam. This man does not come from Sir William Roden, or he would know better what he is talking about."

Antonio gave him a quick glance, and went a little white, but did not speak.

"Why this discourtesy, Richard?" said Lady Marlowe.

"You did not hear him. He talked of Mistress Margaret Roden coming here as Baroness Marlowe. What did he mean?"

"Ay, what?" said she, and Antonio saw her eyes harden. "Have you any letter or token from Sir William, Master Secretary?"

Antonio instantly produced the letter he carried. "Madam, pardon me," he said, "but my master desired me to speak with you before handing you this letter, which is indeed the expression of his perplexity."

"What then perplexes him?" said her Ladyship, as with a sharp little knife she cut the cord of the letter. "Let us see,—but before I weary my eyes with this long epistle, explain your words, Sir. For you also seem to be perplexed, and ignorant of facts. My son there is not Baron Marlowe, and Swanlea is no house of his, that

he should bring his bride here,—except indeed by his brother's hospitality."

"Madam, I very humbly crave your pardon."

Antonio's tone was almost groveling, but in his heart there was triumph. So! he had read the riddle right. There sat the Popinjay, cheated of his bride. How would they take the news, these two, who were not, he could see, over-burdened with scruples? A moment's fear touched him. Would my Lady punish the bearer of the news? Her unlikeness to Sir William's imaginary portrait was somewhat alarming, and for a moment he wished himself safe back at Ruddiford. However, the thing was begun and must be gone through with, as boldly as one might.

"I am miserable enough to have offended you, I do not know how," he said, bowing before her. "My mission is not concerned with your worshipful son, here present, but with my Lord Marlowe's suit to Mistress Margaret Roden, and with the strange manner in which his Lordship left Ruddiford for the north, without even awaiting Sir William's answer."

Isabel lifted her fine brows and gazed at him, consideringly. Richard was beginning to stammer out some angry exclamation, but she checked him with a wave of her hand.

"Young man," she said, "I counsel you to pray to St. Antony, your patron, to grant me patience. With what foolish inventions are you filling our ears? If you truly come from Sir William Roden to me, you must know that my Lord Marlowe visited Ruddiford with the purpose of asking Mistress Margaret's hand for his brother, whom you see there. He bore letters from me to Sir William. This letter is surely a reply to them, and I make no doubt at all that Sir William accepts my proposal, and Lord Marlowe's. You are ill-

instructed, Master Secretary, unless your ignorance be feigned. I cannot tell your object, but I advise you to beware."

Antonio, trembling, went down on one knee. "Madam, have pity, and be just," he said, with eyes that implored. "I can only tell you what happened; your anger is a mystery to me. Lord Marlowe arrived at Ruddiford on Christmas Eve. At once, in my hearing and that of others, he offered himself,—himself, I do solemnly assure you—in marriage to Mistress Margaret. There was no word of marriage with this gentleman," he turned his head towards Richard, who suddenly laughed aloud.

"Is she beautiful, this Mistress Margaret of yours?" he said.

"She is a fair young lady," Antonio answered, with lowered eyes.

"And Sir William? And my letters?" Lady Marlowe asked, with quick fierceness.

Antonio, still kneeling, with natural eloquence told his story. "The whole affair seemed to Sir William passing strange," he said. "He felt that he could do but one thing,—lay it before your Ladyship. Therefore, as no letter could fully explain it, he sent me."

His voice faltered a little. Lady Marlowe, leaning on her desk, shading her eyes with long white fingers loaded with rings, watched him so that the young fellow, bold, cunning, but with little experience, shivered to the marrow of his bones; yet it was not quite with fear, but rather with the fascination of a bird before a snake. He had been fairly sure that in all this strange business it would be wiser to find himself on Lady Marlowe's side. Now he seemed to know that this position might mean more than he had reckoned on.

"Mother, what shall we do?"

young Richard's voice broke in roughly. "Must I lose Ruddiford? Can I now marry this woman whom Harry has left behind?"

"Peace, Dick," said Lady Marlowe. Then she looked again at Antonio. "Go and rest," she said. "Come back to me in the evening, and you shall hear my will."

Then Richard Marlowe watched his mother as she read Sir William Roden's letter, smiling over it, but not pleasantly. There was something in her look which kept the young man silent till she had done.

"Yes, Dick," she said at last. "And they say that your brother is not mad!"

"Nor is he, Mother. I do not trust that foreign fellow. It may be all a string of lies."

"But with what object? No, he has told the truth,—or part of it. I would put him to the question, but the boy is too pretty," and she laughed.

"His face does not please me; 'tis black and villainous," said Richard. "But, Mother, I counted on being master of Ruddiford; you had promised it to me. Will Harry come back from the wars and marry this maiden, and take the castle and estates for himself? And all without a word to you and me?"

"I suppose," said Lady Marlowe, "after this Wakefield battle, the Queen and Harry will do as they please. But do you obey me, Dick, and you shall yet be master of this fair girl and of Ruddiford. And Ruddiford shall be for you, my Lord Edward, my White Rose King!" she muttered, when the boy, shaking his curls and shrugging his shoulders, had strolled off and left her. "This Italian has qualities that will serve; I must make a slave of him."

(To be continued).

GREEN TEA AND POLITICS IN MOROCCO.

He was a grave, personable Moor of middle age, and full of the dignity that would seem to be the birthright of his race. His official position gave him a certain knowledge of political developments without affecting his serene outlook upon life. Whether he sat outside the Kasbah¹ of his native town and administered the law according to his lights, or, summoned to the capital, rode so far as the royal palace there to take his part in a council of the Sultan's advisers, or whether, removed for a time from cares of office, he rested at his ease among his cushions as he was doing now, this Moorish gentleman's placid and unruffled features would lead the Western observer to suppose that he was a very simple person with no sort of interest in affairs. I had occasion to know him, however, for a statesman, after the Moorish fashion, a keen if resigned observer of the tragi-comedy of his country's politics, and a pious man withal who had visited Mecca in the month that is called Shawall, and had cast stones on the hill of Arafat as the custom is among true believers. Some years had passed since a letter, written by a high official in the intricate Arabic character, had opened the portals of his house to me and had let loose, for my benefit, thoughts not lightly to be expressed. We sat side by side on the divan in the *patio*, and we drank green tea flavoured with mint from tiny glasses that were floridly em-

bossed in gilt. Beyond the *patio* there was a glimpse of garden ablaze with colour, and we could hear slaves singing by the great Persian water-wheel and the cooing of doves from the shaded heart of trees that screened a granary.

"Since Mulai el Hasan died," said the Hadj quietly, "since Mulai el Hasan went to his pavilion in Paradise, in an orchard of never-failing fruit through which a river flows as is explained in the Most Perspicuous Book,² troubles have swept over this land, even as the locust comes up before the west wind has risen to blow him out to sea."

He mused awhile as though the music of the garden pleased him, as indeed it must have pleased any man not altogether soulless.

"Before the time of my Lord Hasan," he went on, "there had been troubles enough. I can remember the war with Spain, though I was but a boy. My father was among those who fell at Oud Ras on the way to Tanjah of the Nazarenos. But then your country would not permit these Spanish dogs to steal our land, and even lent the money to satisfy and keep them away. This was a kindly deed, and Mulai Mohammed, our Victorious Master, opened his heart to your Bashador³ and shared with him his innermost councils. And I can re-

² The Koran.

³ The late Sir John Drummond Hay. Ministers of foreign countries are called Bashadors by the Moors, the word being probably their corrupt form of our *ambassador*. Native Ministers are called Viziers, the Prime Minister being the Grand Vizier.

¹ The official building and residence of the Kaid or Basha.

member that great Bashador of yours when he came to this city and was received in the square by the Aguidal Gardens. Our Master the Sultan came before him on a white horse,¹ to speak gracious words under the green umbrella that shades the ruling House.

"A strong man was the Sultan, and he listened carefully to all your Bashador said, still knowing in his heart that this country is not as the land of the Nazarenes, and could not be made like it in haste. His Viziers feared change, the Ulema² opposed it when they could, and nothing could be done rapidly after the fashion of the West.

"Then Lord Mohammed, King of the Age and Prince of True Believers, died, and my Lord el Hasan, who was then in the south, reigned in his stead. And the troubles that now cover the land began to grow and spread."

He sipped his tea with grave pleasure. Two female slaves were peering at the infidel through the branches of a lemon tree, but when their master dropped his voice the heads disappeared suddenly as though his words had kept them in place. In the depths of the garden the nightingale woke and trilled softly. We listened awhile to hear the notes "ring like a golden jewel down a golden stair."

"My Lord el Hasan," continued the Hadj, "was ever on horseback; with him the powder was always speaking. First Fez rejected him, and he carried fire and a sword to that rebellious city. Then Er-Rif refused to pay tribute

and he enforced it—Allah make his kingdom eternal! Then this ungrateful city rebelled against his rule, and the army came south and fed the spikes of the city gate with the heads of the Unfaithful. Before he had rested, Fez was insolent once again, and on the road north our Master, the Ever Victorious, was (so to say, as the irreligious see it) defeated by the Illegitimate Men³ who are from Ghaita, and his House⁴ was carried away. There were more campaigns in the north and in the south, and the Shareefian army ate up the land so that there was a famine more fatal than war. After that came more fighting, and again more fighting. My Lord sought soldiers from your people and from the French, and he went south to the Sus and smote the rebellious Kaids from Tarudant to Iligh. So it fell out that my Lord was never at peace with his servants, and the country went on as before, with fighting in the north and the south and the east and the west. The ships of the Infidel nations came again and again to the Bay of Tanjah to see if the Prince of the Faithful were indeed dead, as rumour so often stated. But he was strong, my Lord el Hasan, and not easy to kill. Then the French took the oases of Tuat, which belong to the country just so surely as does this our Marrakesh, and have ever been a place of resting for the camels like Tindouf in the Sus. But our Master recovered his lordship with his health, and the French went back from our land. After that my Lord el Hasan went to Tafilat over the Atlas, never sparing himself. And when he returned, weary and very sick, at the head of an army that lacked even food and

¹ When a Sultan appears in public on a white horse it is for a sign that he is pleased; a black horse on the other hand is ominous to them that understand.

² Literally Learned Ones, an irregular theological cabinet, the number of whose members is known to no man, but the weight of whose decisions is felt throughout Morocco.

³ A common term of reproach used in speaking of rebels.

⁴ Harem.

clothing, the Spaniards were at the gates of Er-Riff once more, and the tribes were out like a fire of thorns over the northern roads. But because he was worn out and would not rest, and also because the span allotted him by Destiny was fulfilled, my Lord Hasan died near Tadla; and Ba Ahmad, his chief Vizier, hid his death from the soldiers until his son Abd-el-Aziz was proclaimed."

There was a pause here, as though my host were overwhelmed with reflections and found some difficulty in giving sequence to his narrative.

"Our present Lord was young," he continued at last, thoughtfully; "he was a very young man, and so Ba Ahmad spoke for him, and acted for him, and threw into prison all who might have stood before his face. Also, as was natural, he piled up great stores of gold and took to his harem all the women he desired. He oppressed the poor and the rich so that all men cursed him,—privately. But for all that Abu Ahmad was a wise man and very strong. He saw the might of the French in the east and of the Bashadors who pollute Tanjah in the north; he remembered the warships that came to the waters in the west, and he knew that the men of these ships want land, and land, and yet more land, until they have the earth even as they have the sea. Against all the wise men of the west who dwell in Tanjah the Vizier fought in the name of the Exalted of God, so that no one of them could settle on this land to take it for himself and break into the bowels of the earth, seeking for gold after the manner of the Nazarenes. To be sure, in Wazzan and far in the eastern country the French grew in strength and in influence, for they gave protection, robbing the Sultan of his subjects. But they took little land, they sent few to Court, and the country was

ours until the Vizier had fulfilled his destiny and died. Allah pardon him, for he was a man, and ruled this country, like his father before him, with a hand of very steel."

"But," I objected, "you have said while he lived no man's life or treasure was safe, that he extorted money from all, that he ground the faces of the rich and the poor, and that when he died the Marrahshis said 'A dog is dead.' How then can you find words to praise him?"

"The people call out," explained the Hadj calmly; "they complain, but they obey. In the Maghreb it is for the people to be ruled as it is for the rulers to govern. Shall the hammers cease to strike because the anvil cries out? Truly the prisons of my Lord Abd-el-Aziz were full while Ba Ahmad ruled, but all who remained outside obeyed the law. No man can avoid his fate. Even my Lord el Hasan, a fighter all the days of his life, loved peace and hated war; but his destiny was appointed with his birth, and he, the peaceful one, drove men yoked neck and neck to fight for him, even a whole tribe of the rebellious as these eyes have seen. But while Abu Ahmad ruled from Marakesh the land had peace, the roads were safe as in the days of Mulai Ismail, — may God have pardoned him! The expeditions were but few: the land knew quiet seasons of sowing and reaping; and it is better for a country like ours that many should suffer than that none should be at rest."

I remained silent, conscious that he and I could not hope to see life through the same medium. It was as though he looked at his garden through a red glass and I through a blue one. It may be that neither of us saw the real truth of the problem underlying what we are pleased to call the Moorish Question.

"When the days of the Grand Vizier were fulfilled," the Hadj continued gravely, "his enemies came into power. His brother the Chamberlain and his brother the War Minister died suddenly. No wise man sought too particularly to know the cause of their death. Christians came to the Court elevated by Allah and said to my Lord Abd-el-Aziz, 'Be as the Sultans of the West.' And they brought him their abominations, — the wheeled things that fall if left alone, but support a man who mounts them, as I suppose, in the name of Shaitan, the picture-boxes that multiply images of True Believers and are wisely forbidden by the Far-Seeing Book, carriages drawn by invisible djinns¹ who scream and struggle but must stay, and work, small spirits that dance and sing. The Christians knew that my Lord was but a young man, and so they brought these things, and my Lord gave them of his riches, and conversed with them familiarly as though they had been of the House of a Grand Shareef. But in the far east of the Maghreb the French closed the oases of Tuat and Tidikelt without rebuke, and burnt the villages and destroyed the true believers with guns containing green devils² and said, 'We do all this that we may venture safely abroad without fear of robbers.' Then my Lord sent the War Minister, the Kaid M'heddi el Menebhi, to London and he saw your Sultan face to face. And your Sultan's Viziers said to him: 'Tell the Sultan of Morocco to rule as we rule, to gather his taxes peaceably and without force, to open his ports, to feed his prisoners, to follow

the wisdom of the West. If he will do this, assuredly his kingdom shall never be moved.' Thereafter they took the Kaid and showed him their palaces, their pleasures, and the power of their devil-ships that move without sails over the face of the waters, and their unveiled women who pass without shame before the eyes of men. Now though the Kaid said nothing he remembered all these things, and when he returned and, by the aid of your own Bashador in Tanjah, prevailed over the enemies who had set snares in his path while he fared abroad, he stood before the face of my Lord and told him all he had seen. Thereupon my Lord Abd-el-Aziz sought to change that which had gone before, to make a new land as quickly as the stork makes a new nest, or the boar of the Atlas, whom the hunter has disturbed, makes a new lair. And the land grew confused; it was no more the Maghreb, but it assuredly was not as the land of the West.

"In the beginning of the season of change the French were angry. 'All men shall pay an equal tax throughout my land,' said the King of the Age, and the Bashador of the French said, 'Our protected subjects shall not yield even a handful of green corn to the gatherer.' And when the people saw that the tax-gatherers did not travel as they were wont to travel, armed and ready to kill, they hardened their hearts and said, 'We will pay no taxes at all, for these men cannot overcome us.' Then the French Bashador said to the Sultan: 'Thou seest that these people will not pay, but we will give all the money that is needed. Only sign these writings that set forth our claim to the money that is brought by Nazarenes to the sea-ports, and everything will be well.'

"So the Sultan set his seal upon all that was brought before him, and

¹ Djinns are evil spirits. The Hadj is referring to motor cars, of which the Sultan has a considerable collection. His first references are to bicycles and cameras, his last to mechanical toys.

² ? Melinite shells.

the French gold came to his treasury and more French traders came to his Court, so that my Lord gave them the money that had come to him from their country for more of the foolish and wicked things they brought. And then he left Marrakesh and went to Fez, and the Rogui¹ rose up and waged war against him."

The Hadj sighed deeply and paused while fresh tea was brought by a coal-black slave, whose colour was accentuated by the scarlet kerchief upon her head and the broad silver anklets about her feet. When she had retired and we were left alone once more, my host continued.

"You know what happened after. My Lord Abd-el-Aziz made no headway against the Rogui, who is surely assisted by devils or by the devils of France. North and south, east and west, the Moors flocked to him, for they said, 'The Sultan has become a Christian.' And to-day my Lord has no more money, and no strength to fight the Infidel, and the French come forward, and the land is troubled everywhere. But this is clearly the decree of Allah the All Wise, the All Pitying, the One, and if it is written that the days of the Filali Shareefs are numbered, even my Lord will not avoid his fate."

I said nothing, for I had seen the latter part of Morocco's history working itself out, and I knew that the improved relations between Great Britain and France had their foundations in the change of front that kept our Foreign Office from doing for Morocco what it has done for other States divided against themselves, and what it has promised Morocco, without words, very clearly. Then again it was obvious to me, though

I could not hope to explain it to my host, that the Moor, having served his time, had to go under before the wave of Western civilisation. Morocco has held out longer than any other kingdom of Africa, not by reason of its own strength, but because the rulers of Europe could not afford to see the Mediterranean balance of power seriously disturbed. Just as Mulai Ismail praised Allah publicly two centuries ago for giving him strength to drive out the Infidel, when the British voluntarily relinquished their hold upon Tangier, so successive Moorish Sultans have thought that they have held Morocco for the Moors by their own power. And yet, in very sober truth Morocco has been no more than one of the pawns in the diplomatic game these many years past.

We who know and like the country, finding in its patriarchal simplicity so much that contrasts favourably with the hopeless vulgarity of our own civilisation, must recognise the great gulf lying between a country's aspect in the eyes of the traveller and in the mind of the politician.

Before we parted the Hadj, prefacing his remark with renewed assurance of his personal esteem, told me that the country's error had been its admission of strangers. Poor man, his large simple mind could not realise that no power his master held could have kept them out. He told me on another occasion that the great Viziers who had opposed the Sultan's reforms were largely influenced by fear lest Western ideas should alter the status of their womenkind. They had heard from all their envoys to Europe how great a measure of liberty is accorded to women, and were prepared to rebel against any reform that might lead to compulsory alteration of the system under which women live, too often

¹ The Rogui, known throughout Morocco as Bu Hamara (Father of the She Ass), is the Pretender who has been lately making war against the Sultan.

as mere slaves and playthings, in Morocco. Fears about the question of women were at the bottom of most of the opposition to reforms that came from the wealthy Moors. We parted with many expressions of goodwill and he remains for me the best informed and most reasonable Moor I have met. His summary of his country's recent history was by no means complete, but it had to suffer translation and, if he could revise it here, would doubtless have far more interest. But it seemed advisable to get the Moorish point of view and, having secured the curious elusive thing, to record it as nearly as might be.

Sidi Boubikir (my landlord in Marrakesh, a man of high standing, for many years British Political Agent in the Southern capital) seldom discussed politics. "I am in the south and the trouble is in the north," said he. "The Praise to Allah, but I am all for my Lord Abd-el-Aziz. In the reign of his grandfather I made money, when my Lord his father ruled (upon him the Peace!) I made money, and now to-day I make money. Shall I listen then to Pretenders and other evil men? The Sultan may have half my fortune."

I did not suggest what I knew to be true, that the Sultan would have been more than delighted to take him at his word. A very considerable knowledge of Moghrebbin Arabic, in combination with hypnotic skill, would have been required to draw from Boubikir his real opinions of the political outlook. Not for nothing has he held a responsible office in South Morocco. The Sphinx is not more inscrutable.

One night his son came to the Dar al Kasdir and brought me an invitation from Sidi Boubikir to dine with him on the following afternoon. Arrived before the gate of his palace at the time appointed, two o'clock,

we found the old diplomatist waiting to welcome me. He wore a fine linen gown of dazzling whiteness and carried a scarlet geranium in his hand. "You are welcome," he said gravely, and walked before us through a long corridor crying aloud as he went, "Make way, make way," for we were entering the house itself, and it is not seemly that a Moorish woman, whether she be wife or concubine, should look upon a stranger's face. Yet some few lights of the hareem were not disposed to be extinguished altogether by considerations of etiquette, and passed hurriedly along, as though bent upon avoiding us and uncertain of our exact direction, while the female servants satisfied their curiosity openly until my host suddenly commented upon the questionable moral status of their mothers, and then they made haste to disappear,—only to return a moment later and peep round corners and doorways and giggle and scream, for all the world as if they had been Europeans of the same class.

Sidi Boubikir passed from room to room of his great establishment and showed some of its treasures. There were great piles of carpets, and vast quantities of furniture that must have looked out at one time in their history upon the crowds that throng the Tottenham Court Road. I saw chairs, sofas, bedsteads, clocks and sideboards. All must have been brought on camels through Dukala and Rahamna to Marrakesh, and were left to fill up the countless rooms without care or arrangement though their owner's house must hold more than fifty women without counting servants. Probably when they were not quarrelling, or dying their finger-nails, or painting their faces after a fashion that is far from pleasing to European eyes, the ladies of the hareem passed their days lying on cushions,

playing the lute, or eating sweet-meats.

In one room on the ground-floor there was a great collection of mechanical toys. Sidi Boubikir explained that the French Commercial Attaché had brought a large number to the Sultan's Palace and that my Lord Abd-el-Aziz had rejected the ones before us. With the curious childish simplicity that is found so often among the Moors in high places, Boubikir insisted upon winding up the clockwork apparatus of nearly all the toys. Then one doll danced, another played a drum, and a third went through gymnastic exercises; the toy orchestra played the MARSEILLAISE, while from every nook and corner veiled figures stole out cautiously, for all the world as though this room in a Moorish house were a stage and they were the chorus entering mysteriously from unexpected places. The old man's merriment was very real and hearty, so genuine, in fact, that he did not notice how his womenfolk were intruding until the last note sounded. Then he turned round and the swathed figures disappeared suddenly as ghosts at cockerow.

Though it was clear that Sidi Boubikir seldom saw half the rooms through which he hurried me, the passion for building that seizes all rich Moors held him fast. He was adding wing after wing to his vast premises, and would doubtless order more furniture from London to fill the new rooms. No Moor knows when it is time to call a halt and deem his house complete, and so the country is full of palaces begun by men who fell from power or died leaving the work unfinished. The late Grand Vizier Abu Ahmad left a palace nearly as big as the Dar Maghzen itself, and since he died the storks that built upon the flat roofs have been its only occupants. So it

is with the gardens whose many beauties he hoped to enjoy. I rode past them one morning and saw all manner of fruit-trees blossoming, heard birds singing in their branches, and saw young storks fishing in the little pools that the winter's rains had left. But there was not a single gardener there to tend the ground once so highly cultivated, and I was assured that the terror of the Vizier's name kept even the hungry beggars from the fruit in harvest-time.

The home and its appointments duly exhibited, Sidi Boubikir led the way to a divan in a well-cushioned room that opened on to the garden. He clapped his hands and a small regiment of female servants, black and for the most part uncomely, arrived to prepare dinner. One brought a ewer, another a basin, a third a towel, and water was poured out over our hands. Then a large porcelain bowl, encased in strong basket-work, was brought by a fourth servant, and a tray of flat loaves of fine wheat by a fifth, and we broke bread and said the Bismillah which stands for grace. The bowl was uncovered and revealed a savoury stew of chicken with sweet lemon and olives, a very pleasing sight to all who appreciate Eastern cooking. The use of knives being a crime against the Faith and the use of forks and spoons unknown, we plunged the fingers of the right hand into the bowl and sought what pleased us best, using the bread to deal with the sauce of the stew. It was really a delicious dish, and when later in the afternoon I asked my host for the recipe he said he would give it to me if I would fill the bowl with Bank of England notes. I had to explain that in my ignorance of the full resources of Moorish cookery I had not come out with sufficient money.

So soon as the charm of the first

bowl palled, it was taken away and others followed in quick succession, various meats and eggs being served with olives and spices and the delicate vegetables that come to Southern Morocco in early spring. It was a relief to come to the end of our duties, and, our hands washed once more, to digest the meal with the aid of green tea served with mint. Strong drink being forbidden to the true believer, water only was served with the dinner, and as it was brought direct from the Tensift river and was of a muddy, red colour, there was no temptation to touch it. Sidi Boubikir was in excellent spirits and told many stories of his earlier days, of his dealings with Bashadors, his quarrel with the great Kaid Ben Daoud, the seige of the city by Illegitimate Men, of his journey to Gibraltar, and of how he met one of the Rothschilds there and tried to do business with him. He spoke of his investments in Consols and the poor return they brought him, and of many other matters of equal moment.

It was not easy to realise that the man who spoke so brightly and lightly about trivial affairs had one of the keenest intellects in the country, that he had the secret history of its political intrigues at his fingers' ends, that he was the trusted agent of the British Government, and lived and

thrived surrounded by enemies. So far as was consistent with courtesy I tried to direct his reminiscences towards politics, but he kept to purely personal matters and included in them a story of his attempt to bribe a British Minister, to whom he went upon the occasion of the British Mission in Marrakesh, leading two mules laden with silver dollars.

"And when I came to him," said the old man, "I said, 'By Allah's Grace I am a rich man, so I have brought you some share of my wealth.' But he would not even count the bags. He called with a loud voice for his wife, and cried to her: 'See now what this son of a camel-driver would do to me. He would give me his miserable money.' And then in very great anger he drove me from his presence and bade me never come near him again bearing a gift. What shall be said of a man like that, to whom Allah had given the wisdom to become a Bashador and the foolishness to reject a present? Two mules, remember, and each one with as many bags of Spanish dollars as it could carry. Truly the ways of your Bashadors are past belief."

I agreed heartily with Sidi Boubikir; a day's discourse would not have made clear any other aspect of the case.

S. L. BENSUSAN.

THE BALLOON IN WARFARE.

THE war-balloon has had a chequered and somewhat strange career. Within ten years of the memorable occasion when the Brothers Montgolfier first launched their huge paper globe into space the balloon had been recognised as an important accessory of warfare. It was then the early years of the Revolutionary War; and the French Academy lent its aid in establishing, in strict secrecy, a school of aeronautics on behalf of the Republic. A corps of military students to the number of fifty was formed, and every day in fair weather service-like practice went forward with a captive balloon kept constantly inflated. The function of the balloon was to supply facilities not only for reconnaissance but also for signalling, and within a twelvemonth the new instrument was put to a practical and satisfactory test. On the eve of the battle of Fleurus in June, 1797, Colonel Coutelle with two colleagues made a reconnoitring ascent, rising to the height of several hundred feet and remaining aloft in safety while repeated and prolonged observations were carried out; and the decisive victory gained over the Austrians by General Jourdan on the following day was largely attributed to the important information which Colonel Coutelle had obtained from his aerial post of observation.

This was a good beginning for the balloon which had thus proved itself of signal assistance in strategic operations. It becomes, then, a matter of great surprise, admitting of no obvious solution, that Napoleon regarded the aeronautical school with

disfavour and presently abolished it altogether. As at least a partial explanation, however, there has been advanced the following story which is given on the authority of *Las Cases* in his *PRIVATE LIFE OF NAPOLEON AT ST. HELENA*. It was the time of his coronation and Napoleon had allowed the ascent of a balloon to form a part of the festivities. This balloon, however, was dismissed without passengers, and being thus left merely to fate appeared to have behaved itself during the night in a manner which might well be deemed preternatural, for at dawn it was found to be on its direct way to Rome and already to be nearing that city. Nor was this all, for with steady course it passed on till it poised itself over St. Peter's and the Vatican at which point, as though its purpose had been fulfilled, it made a determined swoop to earth and finally flung itself into the lake Bracciano. Moreover, as if to make the portent the more palpable, it first rent itself on the ground and next, ere it plunged itself into the water, carefully deposited a portion of its crown on the tomb of Nero. It would appear that Napoleon, regarding this incident "as a sort of prodigy pointing to his own destiny," henceforward forbade the use of balloons in his army.

An important and interesting statement respecting the utility of the balloon is made by Colonel Coutelle in a report during the campaign of 1794.

I received the order to reconnoitre Mayance, and I posted myself between

our lines and the place within easy distance of its guns. The wind was strong, and to offer more resistance I rose alone, with a diminution in my favour of two hundred lbs. I was at more than two hundred and thirty yards from the ground, when three successive squalls beat me back again to earth with such force that many of the bars that strengthened the bottom of the car were broken. On each occasion the balloon rose with such force and rapidity that thirty-two men at each rope were dragged some distance; it is therefore clear that had the ropes been fixed to anchors they would have broken. The enemy did not fire. A general and some of the staff came out of the town waving white handkerchiefs, which I signalled to our headquarters, and our general went out to meet them. When they met, the Austrian general said: "Monsieur le General, Je vous demande en grâce de faire descendre ce brave officier; le vent va le faire périr; il ne faut pas qu'il soit victime d'un accident étranger à la guerre: c'est moi qui ai fait tirer sur lui à Mauberge." The wind fell: I was able to ascend again; and on this occasion, without a glass, I could count the cannon on the ramparts and see the people walking in the streets.

An abortive attempt was made to revive the French aeronautical school during the African campaign of 1830, and it appears that the Austrians made use of balloons for reconnaissance before Venice in 1849. It is also worthy of mention that balloons were at least dreamed of during the Crimean War. Sir William Reid, the Governor of Malta, in a communication to the War Office in 1855, wrote: "As balloons were successfully used more than sixty years back by a French army, they may perhaps be made of some use in the Crimea just now. To raise an observer even two hundred or three hundred feet above a fortified position might enable assailants to form more correct ideas on inner intrenchments than when only viewing such a position from a height of equal altitude." It was not, however, till 1859, in the Italian

campaign of that year, that the balloon was again turned to much practical use in military service. We then find the Special Correspondent of *THE TIMES* writing thus of some reconnoitring endeavours which were under the management of the civilian aeronauts MM. Godard: "On the day before the battle of Solferino, June 23rd, 1859, even with the best glass nothing was seen at Solferino, which is ordinarily visible from the hills near Castiglione. In the afternoon, however, the Brothers Godard tried from the hill a balloon ascent on a larger scale than some days before from Castenedolo. And on the Austrian side, where this ascent was seen, it is supposed that their plans were discovered by the MM. Godard."

But only three years later the balloon was used in warfare on a very different scale and with far better results. This was in the American War, and one of the earliest accounts of its operations gathered from a report in *THE TIMES* of April 14th, 1862, not long after the war had commenced in earnest, points to very special and signal service rendered by the military aeronauts. The reconnaissance, according to this correspondent, established the fact that shells had been thrown at too great a range to be sufficiently effective against the Confederate batteries: "This defect in mortar-practice has since been remedied."

It is well at this point to glance at the balloon equipment hitherto adopted, and at the all important matter of the various methods of inflation which have been tried. The gas-balloon was not the only form made use of. The older or hot-air aerostat had also been put to the test, and a committee of Austrian engineers had declared that, though a Montgolfier balloon would need to be of very bulky proportions, having

a diameter of at least sixty feet, yet its freedom from troublesome encumbrances, and therefore its relative portability, its durability and safety, and above all the readiness with which it could be brought into action, were very strongly in its favour. Instead of requiring very cumbersome and dangerous apparatus for its inflation this operation could in general be carried out by merely collecting such brushwood as may be presumed to be at hand in all military operations, and when once the process is begun the complete inflation, in the absence of any troublesome amount of wind, would generally occupy not longer than some twenty minutes.

For the gas-balloon there are three separate modes of inflation. First, by coal-gas, in all ways the most convenient but seldom practicable in actual warfare; secondly by pure hydrogen gas, prepared by the usual vitriolic process, of the practical working of which we have now to speak; and thirdly by the same gas produced by passing steam through red-hot tubes. This indeed was the very earliest process introduced with apparent success in the French aeronautic school already spoken of, and in the most recent phase of warfare in South Africa the same gas, as is well known, was conveyed from England in steel cylinders, or from some other centre such as Cape Town where a hydrogen gas-making plant was specially established.

The method of preparing gas by the vitriolic process, or in other words by the action of dilute sulphuric acid on iron or zinc, has been that most usually adopted, and this, as we shall now show, was very thoroughly tested and approved of in the American Civil War. The plant, required to be always at hand and therefore to be transported wherever the balloon was wanted, may seem sufficiently bulky

and troublesome. As actual gas-generators there were needed two large and strongly built tanks of wood made acid-proof inside, and fitted with necessary valves and hose, while lime purifiers and coolers were also wanted. But it was found that the required acid was readily procurable, as also scrap iron, and thus no very serious practical difficulties were experienced in the field. The chief of these, undoubtedly, were wind and weather; but in a general way a squad of about thirty men could convey the inflated balloon, and for the rest four wagons, with four horses each, sufficed. It was claimed that the reconnaissances, which were effected daily when weather permitted, were of the greatest value, and that any change in the occupation of the country would be at once detected. Captain Beaumont, speaking, it will be remembered, of the military operations and manœuvres then in vogue, declared that earth-works could be seen even at the distance of eight miles, though their character could not be clearly detected. Wooded country was unfitted for balloon reconnaissance, and only in a plain could any considerable body of troops be made known. Then followed such a description as one would expect to find:

During the battle of Hanover Court House, which was the first engagement of importance before Richmond, I happened to be close to the balloon when the heavy firing began. The wind was rather high, but I was anxious to see, if possible, what was going on, and I went up with the father of the Aeronaut. The balloon was, however, short of gas, and as the wind was high we were obliged to come down. I then went up by myself, the diminished weight giving increased steadiness; but it was not considered safe to go more than five hundred feet on account of the very unsettled state of the weather. The balloon was very unsteady, so much so that it was

difficult to fix my sight on any particular object. At that distance I could see nothing of the fight.

Undoubtedly the most signal and successful service ever recorded of balloons in warfare was that rendered to the beleaguered side at the siege of Paris. In this case reconnaissance, though at first attempted, was attended with little result and soon abandoned; but during four months a regular despatch of letters from the city was carried on by an aerial post hurriedly but successfully improvised. Upwards of sixty balloons were manufactured within the walls and despatched with but very few casualties. Some two millions and a half of letters, amounting in weight to some ten tons, were conveyed through the four months, in addition to which at least an equal weight of other freight was taken up, exclusive of actual passengers of whom no less than two hundred were transported from the city.

The exceptional conditions of the case in these trials led to interesting and valuable experiments in the extemporising of emergency balloons.

Great expedition in manufacture was of primary importance, as was also the saving of such enormous expense as would be entailed by the use of silk, while it was only necessary that the fabric of the balloon should be able to withstand a single voyage. On this account a calico material was utilised, and speedily and sufficiently rendered gas-tight and serviceable by a crude dressing of linseed oil and driers. The sewing was so arranged that hundreds of hands could be employed at once, and the now disused railway-stations afforded adequate and convenient roofed space for factories. The need of capable men possessed of such training as would fit them for the emergencies and

hazards for the several voyages was supplied by the old sailors residing in the city.

A typical example of the difficulties encountered and the risks run, ere any voyage could be effectually carried out, is supplied by the memorable occasion when Gambetta accomplished his escape. To begin with, no sooner were preparations completed than unfavourable weather supervened and not only delayed the escape but caused damage to the balloon itself; and when at length the ascent was attempted and the aeronauts were fairly in the air they were subjected to a brisk cannonade with shot and shell. A little later when, as yet unscathed, they were sailing over the German posts they came under rifle-fire and Gambetta was grazed by a bullet. From this immediate danger they escaped by a prodigal discharge of ballast, but again had to run the gauntlet between vigorous volleys ere they found safe landing near Rouen.

Up to this time the balloon had found no place in the British army. It is true that in 1862 Mr. Coxwell, as a civilian, had been allowed to make certain experiments at Aldershot, but they proved barren of results, and though the events of the siege of Paris induced the Government in 1872 to appoint a commission of Royal Engineers to conduct aeronautical trials and to report upon them, these also led to no practical issue. It was not till some ten years later that the Government became fully alive to the importance of the balloon in warfare, when the manufacture and trial of special balloons were entrusted to a section of Royal Engineers at Woolwich. The method of making so-called pure hydrogen by passing steam over red-hot iron was fully tested, and for a time gained favour. The apparatus, weighing some three tons, was calculated to be

not beyond the carrying powers of three Service-waggons, while it was capable of generating enough gas to inflate two balloons in twenty-four hours, a single inflation holding good in favourable circumstances for a long period.

The official trials during this year extended to the Brighton Volunteer Review when from a balloon held captive at fifteen hundred feet it was stated that the observation was so excellent that "every man was clearly seen," a statement which should be read in the light of late operations on the South African veldt.

At last a grand opportunity came for trial in actual warfare. The Egyptian Campaign was in progress during 1882 and the peculiar difficulties attending reconnoitring were keenly felt and loudly commented on, yet for many months the War Department balloons remained in store in Woolwich Dockyard, and it was not till the spring of 1885 that the first practical trial of the balloon was made in actual service. This was at Suakin, and Lord Wolseley is reported to have expressed an opinion that, though in a windy country balloons are of little use, yet that had he been able to employ balloons in the earlier stages of the Soudan campaign the affair would not have lasted as many months as it did years. Before the outbreak of the Boer War military methods had undergone great and important changes. Magazine rifles and other deadly weapons of to-day required that troops should lie hidden so far as possible behind cover, while the use of smokeless powder often rendered it almost impossible to locate the position of the enemy's batteries. Thus reconnaissance became a difficult matter, and more particularly so in the case of balloons of the type hitherto in vogue which could scarcely operate within practicable range of

the adversary's fire. It is not surprising to learn that the balloon in the late campaign in South Africa proved to be at a great disadvantage, and with a few notable exceptions failed to accomplish all that was sanguinely hoped of it. No better or more impartial authority could be found than Major Baden-Powell, who was not only actively engaged through the whole of the campaign but is able to speak from many years' intimate acquaintance with practical aeronautics. In giving his opinion as to the value of the balloon this officer quotes from his own experience.

I remember [he writes] at the battle of Magersfontein my company was lying down in extended order towards the left of our line. We were perfectly safe from musketry-fire as we lay perhaps two miles from the Boer trenches, which were being shelled by some of our guns close by. The enemy's artillery was practically silent. Presently on looking round I descried our balloon away out behind us about two miles off. Then she steadily rose and made several trips to a good height; but what could be seen from that distance? When a large number of our troops were ranged up within eight hundred yards of the trenches, and many more at all points behind them, what useful information could be obtained by means of the balloon four miles off?

This same authority further insists on the necessity of an observing balloon making short ascents. The balloon, in his opinion, should be allowed to ascend rapidly to its full height, and with as little delay as possible be hauled down again.

It is here, then, that the question arises whether the increased facilities of the present day would not render the earlier form of the balloon not only more serviceable but in many ways more desirable. It needs no insisting on that the methods of inflating a military balloon with gas hitherto attempted, whether this be

conveyed under high pressure in great numbers of heavy and dangerous cylinders, or whether it be produced by troublesome and tedious process in the field, is attended with the most serious drawbacks and difficulties. Many Service-waggon are required and the attendance of a large staff of men. Moreover the fabric of the balloon itself, generally composed of several thicknesses of gold-beater's skin, is not only very costly but fragile, and when damaged cannot readily be repaired. On the other hand the hot-air balloon being constructed of inexpensive and strong material, — unbleached calico even serving for the purpose—and dispensing with the addition of a net or other covering, can be handled without risk of damage, and should a rent occur this can be at once set right by mere needle and thread. Its equipment is inconsiderable, and so portable that the whole plant could be rapidly conveyed by hand wherever a few men could push their way. It has been the inflation of this balloon, as hitherto practised, that has put it out of court so far as military operations are concerned. A large, long covered trench has first to be constructed by way of flue with a bricked aperture; not less than a cart-load of dried firewood is next needed to be consumed in a pit at the far end of the trench; and when all has been done and the balloon despatched aloft its buoyancy is rapidly lost and it returns to earth again in a very brief period. It is true that at the first introduction of this balloon, and on occasions subsequently, a stove burning wood or straw was taken up and the life of the balloon thus prolonged, but this was only effected at extreme risk to the aeronauts.

Recently, however, all former difficulties have been successfully overcome, and a very portable heater,

burning vaporised petroleum in perfect safety and under complete control, has now been utilised to inflate a balloon of no less than sixty-five thousand cubic feet capacity in an interval measured by minutes only and at a cost not exceeding a few shillings. It will at once be seen that the possibilities of this method are very great indeed. The complete vaporisation, under pressure, of about four gallons of petroleum per hour, so long as the heat is continuously maintained, supplies sufficient heat-units to keep the balloon fully inflated, and a few occasional strokes of a force-pump preserves the requisite pressure in the oil-tank; while a mere tap, regulating the flame, gives the aeronaut the power of controlling the ascent or descent of his machine.

Presumably the chief use of the balloon in warfare will, as heretofore, be while being held captive; but a new and all important development of this military engine here suggests itself.

Not only may a free balloon effect an escape from a beleaguered town, but, when made more portable and manageable, it may be utilised to convey tidings to other stations when other modes of communication are interrupted. Referring once again to Major Baden-Powell as a first authority we may quote from a letter written from the front in South Africa and published in *THE AERONAUTICAL JOURNAL*.

There is one more matter to call attention to and that is free ballooning in war. I believe it was never attempted during the campaign, but there were several occasions on which it might have proved of use. Thus, if a balloon had ascended during a favourable wind at Modder River it should have had but little difficulty in arriving within the precincts of Kimberley, and thus much valuable information obtained of the exact position of the Boers between those places, which information

could have been signalled back. I imagine, too, that the Ladysmith balloon could have been the means of obtaining most important details of the Boer positions north of the Tugela had a free ascent been made during a northerly wind.

Before these words were penned the writer had experimented with a free balloon designed to convey messages which might be signalled across the sky over long distances, so that should the despatched balloon be carried wide of its true goal its purpose could still be effected. The instrument adopted was essentially the collapsing drum as used in the Navy, but modified to suit the requirements of the case. A large skeleton frame capable of being quickly extended or collapsed by the operation of a cord, much as an umbrella is made to open or shut, was covered with a dark material which would show readily in unobscured sky in all ordinary conditions of illumination. The extended drum, which was visible at fully ten miles distance, would vanish practically out of sight when collapsed, and thus the ordinary Morse Code signals as constantly practised in the Service, indicated by long and short strokes of the drum, could be readily carried out and as readily interpreted. A further development of this method of aerial signalling available whenever ordinary heliographing is possible has now been made by substituting a large silvered glass globe which, by means of a suitable occulter, can be made to reflect long or short flashes of sunlight visible under favourable conditions over long distances.

In any discussion as to the utility of the military balloon under the altered conditions introduced by modern weapons of precision and long range a common misapprehension has to be removed. It is popularly, and

not unreasonably, supposed that a balloon which has been hit by mere rifle-shot is hopelessly maimed if not practically destroyed. In reality, however, if the envelope of the balloon were fairly riddled by bullets, near the mouth only, the leakage of gas would be inconsiderable, as may be readily understood from the fact that the large mouth of a balloon in flight is always of necessity kept fully open to allow for the expansion of gas during the ascent. It is only in the case of a balloon badly hit above the waist that the loss of gas would be serious, and even thus, were the rents small, the balloon would collapse in no dangerous haste. Pompoms are considered to deliver the most deadly fire in the case of a balloon, but as at present used they are incapable of being elevated sufficiently to hit any object floating well aloft.

Another popular error, and one that relates to the possibilities of a balloon employed in warfare, is apt to possess the minds of those who have no practical experience in the science of aeronautics. It is supposed that a high flying balloon could be used, and with deadly effect, to discharge missiles upon an enemy beneath; and even so practical an aeronaut as the late John Wise of America, allowing such a plausible idea to warp his better reason, actually proposed to the United States Government, during the Mexican War, a scheme for the capture of Vera Cruz by balloon. His plan was drawn out in full detail: a monster balloon capable of raising thirty thousand pounds was somehow to be manœuvred over the fortress at a mile high in the sky, and when in position explosives were to be cast down in sufficient quantity to reduce the stronghold. This may read well enough on paper; the extreme difficulty, however, of directing

a balloon at that height so that missiles at the end of so long a drop might hit a given mark needs no pointing out, and when it is further considered that each discharge of combustibles would require for compensation an exactly regulated amount of gas to be liberated, it becomes obvious that such a method is altogether impracticable.

One most feasible and at the same time most serviceable development of the military balloon, whether captive or free, will be in the direction of photographing an enemy's position or fortification, or any ground which cannot be reconnoitred by other means. The rapidity with which a photograph can now be taken; the almost equal expedition with which it can be developed on the field, and still more the fidelity with which it may be made to portray objects brought within suitable range, give the camera the utmost value as an instrument for purposes of observation. But its greatest advantage in this connection is made manifest when we consider that if used in conjunction with a captive balloon it is not even necessary that the operator should be exposed to fire. An unmanned balloon, and this of the smallest proportions, suffices to lift the camera and its necessary fittings to any desired height, when it can be operated electrically from below. The requisite apparatus in its simplest form consists essentially of an electro-magnet fixed to the camera and controlling the trigger of an instantaneous shutter. To this electro-magnet is attached a twin insulated wire the other end of which remains on the earth, connected with a battery and push or button. The camera, which is mounted on a stand capable of canting it to any desired angle, is suspended by a short length of laid cord beneath the balloon before it is dismissed into the sky, and when the

balloon is poised aloft it will always be found that owing to the natural twist of the cord the stand and its camera are slowly and steadily rotating after the fashion of a bottle-jack. If now there has been affixed to the stand some indicator always showing the direction in which the camera is pointing, it will be perfectly easy to determine the exact moment at which any desired view is in the field, and the button being pressed the required photograph is instantly secured. A more elaborate apparatus would provide arrangement for causing the camera at this moment to automatically set itself for a fresh exposure, but recent experience has shown that this is scarcely desirable. With modern weapons of rapidity and precision it is seen that a balloon, if at all within near range of the enemy, should only be exposed to fire for the briefest possible interval, and it would therefore be preferable to haul down the balloon and camera after each exposure, and send them aloft afresh for further photographs, and, if possible, from an altered position.

Any discussion as to the capabilities of a balloon duly equipped and controlled by modern methods, to render special service in possible exigencies of war, would be incomplete without record of certain experiments carried out last summer on old lines traversed anew. At the time already referred to when balloons were being dismissed from Paris carrying despatches over the enemy's line and descending into safe country beyond, the converse feat was also more than once essayed but without success. That is, ineffectual attempts were made to despatch a balloon from some distant point which should pass over the enemy's line and drop within the beleaguered city carrying in intelligence from without. To all intents and purposes this identical experiment was

arranged and carried out by the writer in the manner now to be explained.

Obviously the problem remained the same whether (as in the case of Paris) the goal was fixed and the starting-point was chosen according to the direction of the wind, or whether the starting-point was fixed and the goal chosen to suit the wind. Thus for convenience it was arranged that an ascent should be made from the Crystal Palace and a certain area (a radius of five miles round Blackheath station being determined on) was for the nonce to be chosen to represent Paris. Into this area it was the task of the aeronaut to convey one or more passengers carrying despatches, and this was satisfactorily accomplished with the odds of a double chance in favour of the venture.

First when the desired spot was thought to be reached a bearer of despatches (this for safety's sake being a dummy) was dropped in a parachute, and shortly after the balloon itself was made to descend in ground more carefully chosen, when in point of fact it was found that both descents had been accomplished within a two mile limit from the prescribed goal.

This supplied but another demonstration of the fitness of a free balloon for purposes of war where its special utility has not hitherto been fairly tested. It is not only when captive that the balloon as an aerial scout can be turned to account, but there can be small doubt that it will be found capable of rendering service, invaluable and all its own, when suffered to make its free and proper flight across the open sky.

JOHN M. BACON.

KARMA.

(A Legend of Ghostly Japan.)

HERE by the reddening maple-trees I lie,
 And see the sun slow climbing down, and pray :
 "Sink, sun, into the wide mysterious West,
 That I may pass into my mystery,
 Die, die, bright day, for weary 'tis to wait."
 The years, the yearning years, not patiently,
 Oh love, not patiently, I lived alone !
 Ah, you that have sweet lips to kiss at morn,
 And every night lie still in clasping arms,
 Who speak in happy, common, household phrase,
 With children innocent about your knees,
 Whose loves are set on something tangible,
 I am apart,—for I have loved a Shade.

The falling night, the moors, and I alone,—
 The mountain black before me on the sky,
 That paled from gold to green like asphodels,
 Growing amid the myrtles of a marsh,
 And from the mountain flashed long flames of fire
 To guide the wandering souls upon their ways.¹
 For now it was the season and the night
 When, from the dimness that we know not of,
 The poor unrestful shades may come and go,
 Borne by the kind wind wheresoe'er they will.
 Like sighing of the strings upon a lute,
 When the sweet music's ended, so the sound
 They made in calling as they lightly passed,
 And vague their forms as shadows on the mist.

There was a lady in the night, whose face
 I cannot see, though I have prayed to all
 The gods in Heaven, this only prayer until
 I had no other sense in me but this,
 Desire to look upon thy face, my bride.
 Forever with me are indifferent eyes,
 The smiles of children I knew long ago,
 And strangers seen, unseeing, yesterday ;
 But never thou, oh first love and my last !

¹ Japanese of the Shinto religion believe that on a certain day of the year the spirits of the dead are allowed to return to earth.

She came to me, her feet two lotus-buds,
 And she was clothed as with the foam of seas.
 She spoke: "So thou hast come my lord, at last
 To comfort me." And I said, "I have come."
 Then knew I that I loved her, and had loved
 Since love was: time is not for such as we.
 There was a silence on the moor, and yet
 A harmony so exquisite, it seemed
 My heart was still to hear it. So we stood.
 Tall were the lilies in a ring about,
 And all night long we stood without a word,
 Not touching one another. At the dawn
 She sighed as if awaking, and I cried:
 "Who art thou, love? Tell me thy name." But she:
 "Love what have you and I to do with names?"
 And took her golden girdle, and unclasped,
 (A scaled dragon with translucent eyes),
 And wound it round about my arm nine times,
 And kissed each circle as she wound and said:
 "These are the years until we meet again:
 A little time, oh but a little time
 To me; but long for thee, poor mortal love!
 I go to mine own people on the plain,
 Seek not to find me there, but wait for me."
 She spoke, and speaking grew ethereal
 Like to a mist. I saw the standing lilies,
 Behind where she had been, and crying out,
 I fell upon the ground to hold her sleeve
 That trailed; but I had nothing in my hand
 Though it grew cold. And then I saw no more,
 But lay as one dead, still in the grey dawn.

Her golden token wound about my arm
 I fled the haunted moors and turned my face
 To the low plain; for I cried to myself,
 In the clear living air of early day,
 "She is gone down into the plain and I
 Will find her there." With winged feet I ran
 Down, down, until I saw the river flow,
 Bright in the red rays of the rising sun.
 And drifting on the stream were boats of flowers,
 The red dianthus and campanula,
 With hair bells and a rosy meadow-sweet
 That loves the East.¹ One took my hand and said:
 "Stay here awhile with us and bid God-speed
 To the returning souls." And I said: "Nay,—

¹ It is a custom in the country to send off boats of flowers at sunrise, after the night of souls.

Sweet passage may their's be into the vague,
And fadeless all their flowers—I cannot stay."
So came I to the plain and sought her there,
And found her not, nor any human face,
But only graves—old, grey, forgotten graves.

Where is the sun? A little sun and dim
And far, so far away! How strange a mist
Dark, dark and cold! Why am I lying still?
Nine years—it is the season and the night,
And soon the time—then why do I lie here?
The world is whirling round so fast, and all
The mountains sail away, and my limbs fail:
I cannot keep my feet. I'll say to her,
When she shall come again upon the wind:
"Sweet love, forgive me that I faint and fail,
And, love, forgive me, I forgot thy face:
For pity, count it not unfaithfulness."

G. J.

THE GIRLHOOD OF GEORGE SAND.

AN enterprising publisher has lately attempted a resurrection of *Forgotten Books*. Is it a task of the same kind that one attempts in speaking of George Sand, or is it rather that she has come definitely to rank as a Classic? As we all know, the doom of the Classic is to be praised and not read. Still there are a few eccentric persons here and there who read their Classics, who, when a new book is recommended to them, take down an old one. Years ago, on the advice of some elder, or perhaps stimulated by Matthew Arnold's graceful appreciation, we spent half-a-crown on an edition of *CONSUELO* in green paper covers, and to this day we are grateful for the hours of enchantment procured us by that delightful romance, and by others from the same hand. Surely the world will never wholly forget the creator of *VALENTINE* and *LA PETITE FADETTE*, the kindly and inexhaustible story-teller.

There are signs across the Channel that George Sand's work, neglected and decried during the high-day of Realism, is claiming its own again from critics and lovers of literature. Here in England we are by no means out of the realistic wood. We still demand of our novelists that they shall tell us something of actual life, —something about corners in wheat, or the wickedness of the Smart Set, or the machinations of the Ritualists, —the ways of Cardinals or of Hooligans, —it does not much matter what. Neither does the public enquire too curiously into the competence of the novelist to instruct it. It is quite ready to take the Cardinals on trust

from Little Bethel and the Smart Set from Peckham. But it calls aloud for what it fondly imagines to be Actuality, and it shuts the door on Romance.

Now nothing can be less actual, in the reporter's sense, than the novels of George Sand. That is not to say that they are not true to life. A very great deal of close and careful observation is woven into them; much knowledge of human nature, a full and varied experience goes to make them. But with all this she was a poet and dreamer from her babyhood. Just as Scott went about his sheriff's work, or his business as a landowner, with the novel of the hour taking shape at the back of his brain, so she lived in dreamland, "with visions for her company," —visions which are such good company for us because they were so real to her.

Her own career was as strange as the wildest of her romances. Part of it has been discussed more than enough; gossip about Musset, gossip about Chopin, the world can afford to let die. There is more to be gained by studying her girlhood, as we may do in the frank and detailed record that she has left of it. For what she was as a child, that she was as a woman, and the whole bent of her genius was conditioned by the circumstances of her birth and training. Her revolutionary theories and her aristocratic tastes, her piety and anticlericalism, her astonishing moral lapses and her persistent magnanimity and rectitude, —her bad and good, in short, become less paradoxical and puzzling when we learn how she came to be what she was.

On her father's side she came of a line of ancestors whose history belongs to the *chronique scandaleuse* of pre-Revolutionary Europe. Her grandmother was the daughter of Maurice de Saxe, one of the numerous offspring of Augustus the Strong, King of Poland, and of a certain Demoiselle Verrières, an actress of some note in her day, whose history, more curious than edifying, has lately been the subject of a monograph by a French author. Marshall Saxe acknowledged his daughter and she was carefully educated and married to the Count of Horn, who soon left her a widow. On the death of her husband the young Countess retired to a convent, where without taking the veil she lived in semi-seclusion, going little into the world but seeing some of the leading people in the society of the time on a quiet footing of intimacy. She was fair and very pleasing in appearance, cultivated, accomplished, and of spotless reputation. Hampered by her equivocal parentage and amid all the snares of a corrupt society, "she lost," says her granddaughter, "not a feather from her wing." At the age of thirty she took as her second husband M. Dupin de Franceuil. It was a marriage of esteem; the bridegroom was more than twice as old as his bride, but he was a typical gentleman of the old school in manners and character. On the only son of this marriage, Maurice, named after his grandfather the hero of Fontenoy, Aurore de Saxe lavished all the passion of her nature. Handsome, kindly, and charming, he was a son whom any mother would have idolised. His correspondence with his mother at Nohant, while he was serving as an officer under Napoleon, shows him to have been possessed of no inconsiderable literary talent, while it exhibits his impulsive affectionate character in a decidedly engaging light.

He wrote to his mother, whom he evidently worshipped, long letters, with the fullest details of all his affairs and occupations. He made no secret to her of his admiration for a pretty adventuress whom he met in Italy, and she on her part treated the incident as French mothers do take these things. It was different when the fancy threatened to become a serious attachment, demanding the engagement of a lifetime.

Sophie Victoire Delaborde was no ordinary woman. The child of a street-hawker, thrown on the world at the age of fourteen to make her own way as she could, she impressed even unfavourable judges by her natural distinction, her originality and generous temper. She had for Maurice Dupin one of those redeeming passions which are so common in fiction and so rare in real life. He on his side wished to give her his name, but the strong opposition of his mother withheld him. At last the sense of what he owed to the woman whom he loved sincerely and who, whatever her past faults, had been a loyal and constant comrade to him, overcame the dread of his mother's anger and of her tears, which were harder to resist. They were married, and soon after their famous daughter was born, and called Aurore after Madame Dupin de Franceuil.

What followed was curious. Maurice dared not confess what he had done, while Madame Dupin, though perfectly well informed of what had happened, said nothing to her son, but secretly endeavoured by every means in her power to annul the marriage. Meanwhile son and mother continued in affectionate correspondence. Maurice went down to Nohant, but said no word on the matter of which his thoughts were full, and Madame Dupin, while her heart bled at this want of confidence, went on with her

schemes for separating him from his wife. There was nothing to be done, however; the knot was too firmly tied.

In these circumstances what could a poor lady do, who had put all her eggs in one basket? The story of her final relenting, as told by George Sand, is almost too pretty to be true, and one suspects some "arrangement" on the part of the novelist. She relates how Maurice Dupin, on hearing that his mother was in Paris, jumped into a cab with his baby daughter, arrived at the house where Madame Dupin was staying, and persuaded the porter's wife to take the infant with her into Madame's room. The portress accordingly introduced the baby (a handsome dark-eyed little creature, strikingly like its father) as the child of a friend. Madame Dupin admired it and condescended to take it on her knee; suddenly the poor woman began to tremble violently. "You have deceived me," she cried, "I know who it is. It is like—it is like—" The baby, frightened by her agitation, began to cry and the portress, alarmed and apologetic, attempted to take it away; but Madame Dupin would not part with it, and when Maurice appeared, he found his mother, with the tears running down her face, chirruping to the little creature and trying to make it laugh.

From that time the mistress of Nohant, having taken the little Aurore to her heart, found it necessary to make an effort to tolerate the child's mother. Almost from the time of her birth Aurore Dupin was, as her father had been, a sort of battledore tossed to and fro between these women, a perpetual bone of contention for their jealous affection. When Maurice Dupin, riding home to Nohant one dark night, was killed by a fall from his horse, the opposition between them was calmed for a time

by their common grief, but it soon broke out again, with cruel results for the poor child who was the victim of their dissensions. On one side was Madame Dupin de Franceuil, a type of the eighteenth century aristocrat, with that physical inactivity and uselessness, fostered by the conventions of her training, that alertness of mind and facility of conversation of which such portraits as the Marquise de Villemer remind us. Hers was a keen intelligence saturated with the notions of the pre-Revolutionary period, deistical and anti-clerical, and yet so much a slave to the opinion of society, even on points where she despised it, that she had her little granddaughter prepared for her first communion while warning her at the same time not to be so superstitious as to believe what she was told, and sent her to be educated in a fashionable convent, while dreading above all things that she should be affected by the religious atmosphere of the place. These curious inconsistencies in the conduct of her grandmother affected, we may be sure, the sensitive observer who was growing up under her roof, and more especially as she had the opportunity of contrasting so marked a type of the old aristocracy with the woman of the people who was her mother.

This *modiste* with a smirched reputation was in some ways not unworthy to be the mother of a genius. It was not her beauty alone which had attracted Maurice Dupin; she had grace, spirit, and versatility, and these qualities had their effect even on Madame Dupin de Franceuil who distrusted and disliked her. She was marvellously clever with her fingers, active and practical like a true *Parisienne*, devout in her own queer fashion, affectionate, industrious. She brought up her daughter in a breezy impetuous fashion, alternating blows

and caresses, passionately tender, and again as violently unreasonable.

Such as she was, it was a sad day for *Aurore* when she went back to Paris to live, and the child was left at Nohant to be brought up as her grandmother's heiress. The system of repression on which Madame Dupin went was hard for the wild creature to bear. She was never kissed on impulse, but deliberately as a reward. She was constantly being reminded to hold herself properly, not to loll, not to run, to wear her gloves, and generally to remember that she was a young lady, and must behave as such. She behaved outwardly with a docility that deceived her guardians, but inwardly she was possessed by the idea of a great renunciation. Some day or other she would surrender her rank and estate and go to help her mother in the milliner's shop that "Madame Maurice" talked of opening, with malicious satisfaction in the mortification which she pictured Madame Dupin as feeling when she read her son's name over the shop door in gilt letters a foot long.

Thus outwardly submissive and inwardly rebellious, her life went on. She did lessons with the tutor attached to the household, a sort of French *Dominie Sampson*, who also acted as bailiff of the estate. Since no one taught her any religion, she invented a deity of her own, made him a little shrine in a corner of the garden, and sacrificed to him by catching birds and butterflies and setting them free in his honour. Her favourite books were translations of the *ILIAD* and *JERUSALEM DELIVERED*, which gave her the framework for the dream-world in which she lived. She could not remember the time when she did not make up romances to herself. When she was a baby of three or four in her mother's little flat at Paris, *Victoire* used to fence her in

with chairs to prevent her getting into mischief, and she amused herself in this kind of cage with inventing interminable stories. Sometimes she would sit for a long time together on a stool at her mother's feet, plunged in these imaginations; and at such times her face was so expressionless that those who watched her feared she would turn out an exceptionally stupid child. Through all her life, to the very end, this lack of outward brilliance and vivacity was noticeable in her, and it was due to her intensity of inward reverie and vision.

These dreamy moods alternated with periods of violent activity. Her grandmother discovered at last that confinement to the house really hurt her health and she was allowed to run wild with the little villagers of Nohant.

I loved solitude with passion. I loved the society of other children with equal passion. I had friends and companions everywhere. I knew in what field, or meadow, or on what road, I should find *Fanchon*, *Pierrot*, *Aline*, *Rosette*, and *Sylvain*. We camped in the ditches, in the trees, by the streams. We kept the flocks,—that is to say, we did nothing of the kind, and while the goats and sheep were feasting on the young wheat, we were wildly dancing, or eating our brown bread and cheese, wild pears and crab apples, blackberries from the hedge, and roots,—nothing came amiss to us.

In the winter evenings she often made one of the party who gathered round the great fireplace in the farmhouse kitchen to listen to the tales that the old women told over their spinning-wheels. Such was the apprenticeship of the child who was to write in after days *LA MARE AU DIABLE* and *LA PETITE FADETTE*.

She knew by heart that country described so deliciously in the opening chapters of *VALENTINE*, "a country of fresh and calm landscapes, of soft green meadows, of melancholy streams."

Her nature was so impressionable that the words of a folk song, with their hint of "old, unhappy, far-off things" could set her weeping. The fields and woods about Nohant had an attraction for this poetic soul, which even from the stir of Paris and the charm of Italy, from fame and love, society and adventure, called her back with an irresistible nostalgia to live and die among them.

In the midst of these calm and happy influences she was haunted by a sense of social injustice. She rebelled at the idea that her mother was working for her bread, while she herself was being brought up to a life of comparative luxury. All the generous instincts of the child's soul went out to the despised and ostracised mother. At last it came to the ears of Madame Dupin that the child nourished the idea of running away from her and going to Madame Maurice at Paris. It seemed to the grandmother that the influence which she so dreaded could only be combated in one way. She called Aurore to her and solemnly told her that her mother was unworthy to have the charge of her.

She might have told me also how my mother had redeemed the past, how since his death [her father's] she had lived humbly, sadly, quietly. I thought I knew this, but I was given to understand that if they told me all the past they spared me for the present, and that there was in the actual life of my mother some new secret which they would not tell me, and which ought to make me tremble for my own future if I insisted on living with her.

The cruelty and folly of such a revelation to a child of twelve does not need dwelling on. It spread a cloud of darkness and mystery about the sweetness and most generous of her affections; it filled her with a morbid distrust. For a time she was

as if stunned, and went about things mechanically, without life or interest. But by degrees the secret strength of her nature reasserted itself. "I discovered," she says, referring to that curious absence of resentment which was so marked a feature of her character, "that I loved both my mother and my grandmother as much as before." Nevertheless she had lost her childish ideal; that glimpse into a dim world of evil, that horror of a vague danger, spoiled all her dreams. The outward effect of this mental and spiritual shock was to make her wild and unmanageable, and the end of it all was that Madame Dupin decided to send her to the Couvent des Anglaises in Paris.

The Couvent des Anglaises was an old religious house, founded under Cromwell for the benefit of English Roman Catholics who were driven from England by the Puritan persecution. Even when Aurore Dupin went there as a pupil, all the nuns were English, Scotch, or Irish. They kept to their English ways, taking tea three times a day, we are told, among other things.

The cloisters and the church were paved with long slabs, under which reposed the venerated bones of English Catholics dead in exile and buried by special favour in this inviolable sanctuary. Everywhere on the walls and on the tombs were epitaphs and religious sentences written in English. In the parlour of the Superior were old portraits of English princes and prelates, with the lovely and frail Mary Stuart, who was accounted a saint by our irreproachable nuns. In short all was English, past and present; and when you had passed the *grille*, it seemed that you had crossed the Channel.

The life at a girls boarding-school has never (if we except VILLETTE) attracted a chronicler of genius; and we should, therefore, be all the more

thankful for those chapters of the *HISTOIRE DE MA VIE* in which Madame Sand, in her old age, retraced her experiences while under the care of the English nuns. They have all the delightful ease and vivid naturalness of her best novels.

The convent was a rambling old house, full of useless stairs and passages, and corridors that led to nothing, and behind it was a huge garden with great chestnut trees. The nuns were kind, well-bred sensible women for the most part, and the chief complaint she has to make of them is that they did not take sufficient part in the teaching themselves, but left too much of it to lay-teachers of an inferior grade. To the sensitive child who had been so long distracted between two jealous and exclusive affections, the convent seemed a haven of rest.

The pupils were unofficially divided by a classification of their own into *diabes*, *sages*, and *bêtes*. Aurore naturally ranged herself among the *diabes*. One of their favourite amusements was to explore the disused parts of the convent, climbing on the roofs and penetrating to the cellars, with the view of "delivering the victim" as they called it. There was a story, handed down from one generation of pupils to another, about some prisoner who was supposed to be concealed in a recess of the old buildings, and whether this legend inspired faith or not, it furnished an excuse for exciting and breakneck expeditions at unlawful hours. In the case of one of the madcaps, it did more; it fostered that love of secret chambers and subterranean passages, which found expression in episodes like Consuelo's experiences in the Castle of Rudolstadt. In describing the heroine's underground adventures in company with the ineffably dreary Count Albert, was she not living over

again the nocturnal escapades of the *Couvent des Anglaises*?

Gradually the girl outgrew these tomboyish diversions, and the reflective, emotional side of her character took the upper hand. Born with a devotional temperament and a questioning rebellious intellect, she was doomed to be buffeted between these opposing tendencies as she had been from the beginning between her noble grandmother and her plebian mother. In the atmosphere of the convent religion asserted its claim. She began to be curious of the devotional life, to study the biographies of the saints. The crisis that followed is best described in her own words.

It [the church] was only lighted by the little sanctuary lamp, the white flame of which was reflected on the polished marble like a star in still water. Pale gleams from it played on the angles of gilded frames, on the wrought candlesticks of the altar, and on the gold surface of the tabernacle. The door was open on account of the heat, and so was a large window which looked on the cemetery. The perfume of jasmine and honeysuckle was wafted on a fresh breeze. The birds sang. I was conscious of a calm, a fascination, a brooding mystery of which I had never had the idea before.

One by one, the few persons scattered about the church retired slowly—I had forgotten everything—I do not know what passed within me. I breathed an atmosphere of indescribable sweetness, and I absorbed it more by the heart than by the senses. Suddenly, I know not what tremor invaded my whole being. My eyes were dazzled as with a white light in which I was enveloped. I thought I heard a voice murmur in my ear, *Tolle, lege*. I turned, thinking that Mary Alicia [one of the nuns] had spoken. I was alone.

I had no proud illusions. I did not believe in a miracle. I quite understood the sort of hallucination into which I had fallen. I was neither intoxicated nor terrified. I neither sought to increase it nor to withdraw myself from it. Only I felt that the Faith had laid hold of me, as I had wished, by the heart.

After the Lives of the Saints, Chateaubriand, and after Chateaubriand, Rousseau. The daughter of Victoire Delaborde, the granddaughter of the Voltairean Madame Dupin was not of the stuff of which saints are made. Yet her experiences had the effect of making her tender and respectful to every form of sincere religious belief.

At the age of sixteen her grandmother took her away from the convent, and began to think about establishing her in marriage. But the activities of the gallant old gentlewoman were nearly at an end. Soon after the return of Aurore to Nohant, Madame Dupin had a paralytic stroke. The day after the attack Aurore was told that in all probability her grandmother would be "childish" for the remainder of her life. The girl, who, when all was said and done, loved passionately the woman who had brought her up, rushed out into the garden to be alone with her grief, and the indifference of Nature struck her to the heart. Years afterwards, she remembered the "insolent" beauty and calm of that summer morning.

During Madame Dupin's lingering illness Aurore was left very much to herself. She read all the books she could lay her hands on with the zest of a newly awakened intellectual passion, she rode about the country unchaperoned, and scandalised the neighbourhood by her disregard of convention and gossip. The Superior of the English nuns had called her *Sleeping Water*, and through all her

life she astonished those who thought they knew her by the volcanic energy which was usually concealed beneath a quiet indifferent manner.

The death of her grandmother left her in possession of Nohant, with the recommendation that she should have recourse to the protection of her father's family. They did not, however, see fit to countenance her when she went to live with Madame Maurice Dupin. She soon found that her mother's faults of temper had grown upon her to such an extent as to make her almost an impossible companion. It is not surprising that she should have sought to escape from these unsatisfactory conditions of existence by a marriage which seemed to promise comparative independence and a quiet life.

As Madame Dudevant she lived for some years not unhappily. The care of her two children absorbed her, and for the time she was all mother. Then there awoke in her the spirit of her lawless ancestry,—the scorn of convention, the hatred of restraint, the craving for adventure, which she lends to all her heroines, even the most reasonable and respectable, to Consuelo and Caroline as well as to Lelia and Indiana. The rest of her life belongs to the history of the Romantic movement in French literature; but it all lies in germ in the games of the girl who played with the village children in the meadows of Nohant, or dreamed vague dreams of impossible self-devotion in the garden of the Couvent des Anglaises.

HIS FIRST PANTHER.

I.

THE Assistant Collector and Magistrate of the First Class, aged twenty-four, tilted his crazy office-chair as far back as he knew to be compatible with safety, and dispassionately scrutinised the two hand-cuffed specimens of native humanity that stood before him. The evidence for the prosecution was complete. Caught red-handed stealing a goat from the village grazing-ground the two thieves could only offer a bare denial of the charge; and as the denial was not backed by a shred of probability, it only remained to award sentence.

The taller of the two criminals was whining in a dull monotone the usual platitudes indulged in by his class on such occasions, his shifty eye roaming round the office-tent as the monotone proceeded. "The police have thrown a net round me, an unfortunate and innocent man. These witnesses have all perjured themselves. We Ratias are hunters and trappers and jungle-folk, and why should I steal a goat?" Here his glance fell on the Court Flogger untying a bundle of canes outside. Fascinated by the sight, he paused abruptly.

But at the word *Ratia* the smaller thief, a beady-eyed, cheerful-looking little man protested in a shrill cracked voice: "This is no *Ratia* but an outcaste of some city. If he be a *Ratia*, let him show the *Ratia* mark. As for me, I am a *Ratia* indeed, and this son of shame is a liar also."

The Assistant Commissioner started from his reverie. This might be worth investigating, and further, he remem-

bered with pride a lesson learned far back in the last rains when as yet he was new to the country. Riding out of some scrub-jungle on to the cultivated lands he had come upon a gang of brown beady-eyed little men busy setting snares for a herd of antelope feeding hard by. They worked silently, driving in their long pegs by thumps and blows with the palms of their right hands. An hour later, the sight of a fine black-buck kicking in the toils had enormously raised these children of Esau in the Englishman's estimation. "Hard on the hands, your trade," he had observed to a patriarch of the tribe. Whereupon, being simple folk and knowing a friend when they saw one, they had all pressed round his skewbald Arab to show how every male of the tribe bore in the right palm the hall-mark of the *Ratia*,—a horny grey callosity about the size of a shilling.

He had the hand-cuffs opened and examined the four perspiring palms held out for inspection. Those of the taller prisoner were plump and smooth, the hands of a thief. Delay in this case was superfluous; "Thirty stripes," the sentence rang out and the man was taken away. But in the palm of the little prisoner there was the mark right enough. The Assistant Commissioner was distressed. Why, with the Central Indian Jungle teeming with edible roots and berries barely two miles away, and around him the black and yellow antelope roaming in herds through the fields of ripening grain, had this man stooped to steal an old

village goat? He put the question point-blank.

The answer was satisfactory. The police of the District, hot on the track of a dacoity, had raided the Ratias' camp a month ago, arrested the party and seized all nets and snares found on the spot together with two stalking-bullocks. The human portion of the spoil had been released, but the traps and nets and, above all, the priceless trained bullocks, were still in custody. He, the accused, was no *kisan* (cultivator) nor such a one as should work for hire; he hungered for meat, and so he stole the goat.

"Twenty stripes," said the Assistant Commissioner and shut the register of Summary Trials with a bang. "Having been whipped," he added, "you will be given your bullocks and gear this evening."

In a little while the beast-like howls of the first accused bore witness to the assembled villagers to the justice of the Sirkar. The Ratia took his twenty stripes in silence, wriggling prodigiously. On being released, he snorted, slipped a morsel of opium into his mouth and, from force of habit, bent himself to slide into the squatting posture natural to the Oriental. Half-way through the action he appeared to remember something and straightened himself with a jerk. Some one in the crowd (it was the owner of the goat) laughed; the Assistant Commissioner laughed also, and, true flattery, the laugh became general. "When your Highness goes to Durbar," asked a waggish constable of the victim, "will he be pleased to accept a chair?"

The little crowd melted away and the camp resumed its normal aspect of repose. It was the middle of the afternoon. Kingfishers, emerald (the smaller kind) and pied black and white (the larger), hovered in pairs above

the blue tank and dropped like plummet amid a shower of diamond spray. The crumbling fort of some by-gone aboriginal Rajah took up half the village side of the sheet of water, and the battlements were lined with grey monkeys basking and blinking in the warmth. Below the monkeys, out of broken casements and ruined cell-like chambers, burst a wealth of tropic grass and bush and flower. A rustle, and the crest and shining eyes of a peacock were thrust tentatively through a rift in the masonry; the whole bird followed and with him his four mates. They took up statuesque poses full in the eye of the declining sun and backed by a sculptured slab set above a doorway. Below them, again, the lotus-covered surface of the tank crept up to the yellow wall. Small chuckling grebe-like creatures bustled and dived among the vermilion flowers. A bluish-black bird, with preposterously long toes and a cocked-up tail, was racing over the unsteady rafts of leaf in pursuit of an invisible prey, and two bald-headed ibises with scarlet-rimmed eyes stood dreaming in the shallows. Over all hung the fluttering kestrels, patientest of all hunters of the air. Not the faintest zephyr was abroad. The jungle encircled tank and village and cultivated lands with a dense wall of vegetation, and from time to time the broad teak leaves fell, dry and clattering into eternal silence.

The Assistant Commissioner yawned and called for his shot-gun. There were a few acres of snipe-ground below the tank among the rice-fields, and to shoot his dinner had formed for the last month or two part of the daily routine of his life. His silent bearer brought him his weapon and in the other hand his master's heavy '500 Express. There was a significant gleam in his eye, as he awaited permission to speak.

The Assistant Commissioner looked, noted, and said one word, "Why?"

The words tumbled out of the man's mouth in his haste. "It is that rogue of a thief, the twenty-stripe fellow, he says he has sure news of a panther not a mile from here, and if the Sahib will sit up for it, in one hour from now he will obtain a shot. The man is a thief, but he is a jungle-dweller, and perhaps, — but let the Presence himself question him." Now the Sahib was perfectly aware that had not the tale seemed to his servant a genuine one the rifle would never have been taken from its case. "Produce the man," he said.

The thief stepped out from the flies of the tent and salaamed. He appeared but little the worse for his flogging, and in his uncouth dialect began, "Concerning my nets and bullock," only to be cut short by a snort of indignation from the majestic Mussulman behind the Sahib's chair. "To the point, oh scum! Speak about the panther or thy head will be broken. Thy nets—pah!"

So he spoke of the panther. At dawn that day he had come upon the beast licking his bloody chops over the body of a dead heifer in a field hard by the jungle-line. He had scared it off its prey and at evening, when the fields were deserted, it would certainly return to the kill. No time was to be lost. Let the Sahib start, and let a kid also be taken along, for, if the kill had been dragged into the jungle, as was probably the case, the kid could be tethered in the field near a convenient tree and by its bleating lure the panther into the open where a clear shot was possible.

The plan was approved and at once the expedition started. Snipe rose in whisks at their feet as the party picked their way along the narrow rice embankments out towards the drier fields and the fire-line that divides

the Government Reserved Forest from the tilled village lands.

II.

The social nature of the domestic goat of India has gained for that animal an unenviable reputation as the best possible bait for the larger carnivora of the jungle. To employ the offspring of the sacred cow is in a Hindu country impracticable. Your young buffalo stands in moody silence under the tree to which he is bound, or, with an indifference exasperating to the watcher, in the *machan* lies down quietly to sleep; but the kid of the goats, separated from his fellows and deserted by those who have tethered him down, calls heaven and earth to witness the lonesomeness of his position, till for far and wide the round ear of many a beast of prey cocks as at the sound of a dinner-bell. Should the eye of the victim, however, fall upon the watcher in the tree above, the insistent bleatings cease; there is company, and he is not afraid. Hence the black and white kid was elaborately blindfolded before the Assistant Commissioner climbed up into the acacia tree, when, the bandage removed, the natives departed, talking loudly, accordingly to custom, in order to impress on any neighbouring panther the fact that they had really and truly quitted the scene. The goat tugged and strained at the cord in his effort to follow them; then he lifted up his voice in a shrill incessant stream of bleatings.

The watcher sat like a graven image and abandoned himself to a mental attitude of pure receptiveness. To right and left before him stretched the line of Government jungle, a wall of forest cut off sharply from the fields by the regulation forty foot burnt fire-line. Somewhere behind that screen was moving the beast he

had come to kill. Mysterious noises, rustlings, and scamperings over the carpet of dried leaves, told of the presence of the smaller folk of the jungle whose play-hour it was. As the sun sank lower so the voices of the jungle acquired new character in the unearthly stillness of the evening. Pea-fowl called like great cats from one forest giant to another, as they ascended with leaps and flappings to their immemorial roosts in the higher branches. A sambhur stag, a full mile away, sent a challenge to his rival across the river; the call, half bellow, half roar, was taken up vigorously, and the echoes of the river-bed played fantastic tricks with the sound. Near at hand a family of mongooses, hot on the trail, hunted along the fire-line, doubling in and out of the forest-screen like monster weasels. And the goat, in an agony of loneliness, tugged at the cord and shook the air with long quavering bleatings.

The sun was now so low that its rays seemed to strike the wall of jungle in horizontal shafts, lighting up dark alleys where the screen of verdure was thinnest, and flooding the cultivated lands with a warm amber-coloured glow. It was the hour of perfect peace, when, for a brief space, time becomes a word without meaning and seconds are interchangeable with years. Then there came a change.

A band of spotted deer (three hinds headed by a stag) broke at full gallop from the forest, and dashed recklessly across the fire-line and over the bare fields, heading for the further belt of jungle. They passed within gun-shot of the Assistant Commissioner, the stag's antlers thrown back almost to his haunches, his liquid eye distended with terror. The noise of flying hoofs died away and was succeeded by a silence unbroken but for the reedy shrilling of a tree-cricket above the

watcher's head. The pea-fowl had ceased calling. Then a solitary monkey coughed and barked behind the screen of trees, jerking out his observations not, as it seemed, at random, but with an objective. The little goat no longer bleated. It stood staring at the fire-line, and now and again stamped with a nervous fore-foot. Slowly, very slowly, the Assistant Commissioner raised his head and his eyes followed the direction of the glassy gaze of the goat. The beast had come.

With head sunk below his massive shoulders he stood on the blackened fire-line, an old and heavy panther. The dying sun shone full on his broad chest and bowed fore-legs which at fifty paces distant seemed a pinkish white. So still was he that, save for the eyes, the sleek dappled body might have been of moulded bronze; but the eyes, malignant, intense, inscrutable, were fixed in an unblinking stare upon the goat. The goat, with the pluck of its kind, faced the beast in silence, stamping and challenging with pathetically useless little horns.

A fine perspiration burst from the palms of the watcher in the tree, until it seemed impossible to him to hold the rifle firmly. On a sudden, too, the weight of the barrel resting upon his thigh became intolerable. Cramp threatened his bent limbs, yet to move or shoot at this stage was out of the question. The very motion of breathing made the creaking of his leggings horribly audible to his quickened sense of hearing. Minutes passed like hours and still the beast stood, staring.

The sun dropped into the ocean of forest in the West. Then, stepping delicately with noiseless pads, the beast walked across the fire-line. The ground was thick with last year's teak-leaves, but the heavy

fore-paws were lifted and planted in perfect silence. Not for an instant did the yellow eyes relax their intense gaze. On reaching the edge of the field, the body sank upon its quarters, the fore-limbs were slowly extended, and, its chin upon its knuckles, the beast lay down deliberately and watched the goat.

A vague anxiety pervaded the mind of the watcher. The light was fading fast; the panther's back harmonised most astonishingly with the brown and grey of the wheat stubble in the field. Should he shoot now, at thirty yards, or wait for the final rush? Plainly the beast was in no hurry for his food, and might float on for another hour, when, however close the range, accurate aiming would be impossible; the chance must be taken now. The fore-finger felt for the trigger, the grip on stock and barrels tightened, the rifle had journeyed an infinitesimal fraction of the space between hip and shoulder, when the beast rose upon his feet. His progress towards the goat was now even more stealthy than before. The head was sunk lower from the shoulders, and the expression in the straining eyes, which faced the sunset, unspeakably sinister. Yard after yard was covered until a bare score of paces separated the destroyer and his prey. Then rising to his full height he ran very swiftly in upon the goat; but the rifle was up like a flash, and the sights covering the working shoulder-blade. In mid-charge the beast glanced up at the watcher; the eyes flashed defiance, the lip curled in hatred as, aware of danger, the beast swerved in his rush. Too late! The right barrel spoke. Roaring angrily, the panther rolled over and over, struck a hand's breadth too far back, through the lungs. Recovering himself, he made for the

jungle. A bullet from the left barrel finding him ere he reached the fire-line, failed to stop him. Limping, shrunk to half his size, the tail pressed against the tucked-up quarters, a very different creature from that which had emerged from the forest in the pride of savage strength one hour before, stumbled back into sanctuary, whence the crashing of dried leaves and twigs in the darkness told of his scared progress far into the jungle.

The Assistant Commissioner climbed down stiffly to find the jungle-man and a villager scrutinising certain gouts of blood upon the ground. "To-morrow," they said, "the Sahib will find him dead. See, this is blood from the lungs. This was no dog-filching leopard, but the heavy cattle-killer who has vexed us for a twelvemonth past."

Through the myriad noises of the Indian night the party tramped back to the tent.

III.

Personally, I, to whom the Assistant Commissioner confided his experiences in the matter of his first panther, am of opinion that the vigil in the acacia tree at sunset brought on a touch of fever enough to throw his usually steady nerves off their normal balance. He, on the contrary, asserts that on rising next morning he felt as physically fit as he had ever felt in all his life; but he admits passing a bad night, to have twice been awakened by a feeling of intolerable pressure upon his chest, and to have been persistently haunted by dreams of a wounded beast gasping out his life in the dark jungle. He saw it with a curious vividness of detail common to few dreams. On a yellow carpet of withered fronds, under a clump of tall canes in the depths of one of those bamboo groves that vary

with their plume-like foliage the monotony of a teak-forest, the dying panther half crouched, half sat. At every laboured breath blood welled from a gaping wound in the flank. The spotted fore-legs were planted wide apart and the curved claws, ivory white, were plunged convulsively into the matted floor of the jungle. Overhead, the arching stems met to form a leafy canopy that tempered without shutting out the sunlight. The thick clumps of giant bamboos were so compact in themselves and in such close contiguity as to produce the impression of a many-columned vault with groined roof. The deadly stillness furthered this impression. Of his own presence in the grove the dreamer was not aware until the beast, raising his eyes, looked him full in the face. Then suddenly awake and damp with perspiration, he leaped from his bed and called for the early morning coffee and fruit.

Outside the tent his orderly was guarding his master's gun and cartridge-bag in the shade of a huge mango tree. The man of the jungles stood at a respectful distance, leaning on a long be-tasselled spear borrowed for the occasion from the village watchman, and near him squatted four aboriginals, armed one and all with the deadly little axe from which the Gond of the forests is never parted from earliest childhood until death. Unrivalled in woodcraft, their part was to construct a rude litter in the jungle whereon to carry home the carcase of the quarry.

The Assistant Commissioner stepped out into the sunlight, throwing a handful of plantain-skins to the little goat who now, in honoured retirement from a dangerous calling, roamed at will about the camp, harassing with an omnivorous curiosity the soul of the somnolent Madrassi cook. His first

act was to look down the barrels of the rifle and load it, his second, to select and place in his left-hand pocket half a dozen spare cartridges. Then, without further delay, the expedition started in single file, for while the good manners of the orderly forbade him from walking anywhere but immediately at his master's heels, an immemorial instinct akin to that of skein-flying wild-fowl drives the jungle-born to walk each behind the other. Progress is more silent, a single axe clears the way for all, and light conversation is not encouraged on the jungle-paths.

On a cold-weather morning in the forests of Central India it is an exquisite pleasure to be alive. To inhale deep breaths of an air fragrant with a hundred subtle odours of earth and tree, and tempered to a delicious keenness, is like quaffing draughts of a still pure wine. Every bush, every tuft of grass is athrob with life. The ringing call of the grey partridge, happiest of Indian bird-notes, is heard from all sides. From thicket to thicket across perilously open patches of turf the timid quail run in a fearful joy, peering sidelong as they go for a glimpse of their arch-enemy the kite. The cooing of countless doves rises in a bewildering volume of sound, and with only a moderate amount of good luck one may come upon a peacock parading his splendours to his mates in some sunlit glade; such a sight is not soon forgotten. As for the morning in question, a heavy fall of dew sparkled on blade and twig. Once something stirred in a low thorn bush near the path, and three axes whizzing simultaneously from three sinewy arms crashed into the underwood. A dead hare was extracted in triumph and tongues were loosened over this wind-fall, even the taciturn Gonds breaking into speech. But the Assistant

Commissioner was in no mood for talking. An indescribable feeling of depression, mingled with impatience, distracted his powers of observation. The vision of the night rose and troubled him. By what conceivable right had he presumed to murder (for the coward shot had been fired from a position of perfect safety) one of the most beautiful of the Creator's predatory tribes? True, the beast was a proved cattle-lifter, but this was small justification for inflicting on him a death of lingering agony. The beast was wont to kill with swift scientific certainty, no butcher at earning his livelihood. And in one moment, for the only crime of carrying out a natural instinct, he had been reduced to a condition of pierced and crippled helplessness by a foe that dared not meet him on the level and in the open. It seemed a dastardly business, and one to be completed with all possible expedition. Was the beast yet living, or had a merciful death come upon him in the scented night or at grey morning-time? He breathed a silent prayer that the wound might have proved fatal long ago. Then, in startling vividness, there flashed on his inner eye the vision of the vaulted bamboo grove, and an anguish-stricken panther tearing with protruded claws the yellow carpet of matted cane-leaves. He turned suddenly to one of the Gonds trudging in his rear: "Are there any bamboos in the Government jungle?" he asked.

The reply was that only one grove remained, rescued by the Sirkar when the forest had been declared reserved from wasteful destruction at the hands of neighbouring villagers. The canes, added the speaker, were very old and thicker than ordinary.

Upon this, the orderly, a vulture-featured Mussulman with thin henna-dyed beard, launched into reminiscences

of panthers and Sahibs whom he had known and hunted with in his own hot youth,—of Burton Sahib, who was wont to catch panthers in a huge mouse-trap, and, having turned them loose on the parade-ground, to ride them down with a hog-spear alone; of Thomson Sahib who crawled into a lime-kiln after a man-eater and there concluded the business at close quarters with a revolver-bullet between the eyes; and many other great *shikaris* had he, Karim Bux, served, but the greatest of all had been i-Smith Sahib who had over a hundred panthers to his name and, thrice mauled, showed a helpless forearm as evidence of an encounter that had nearly proved fatal.

But the Assistant Commissioner, more than ever lost in his own thoughts, scarcely listened to this narration of legendary exploits of by-gone heroes. Walking as one in a dream, he felt each step bearing him nearer to some undefined disaster, some danger which he strove in vain to grapple with in imagination. Yet, as he repeatedly assured himself, the position in which he found himself the chief actor was commonplace, even hackneyed. Scores of white men in India yearly went through the same performance. Granted that some life still remained in the beast, he would probably charge and be shot down at close range; of the two bullets, one would surely fly straight enough to stop a rush. Should the worst happen and both barrels miss, at his back would be the old orderly with the shot-gun loaded with slugs, and there was also the man with the crimson-tasselled spear. The situation could hardly hold other events in store for him; what danger there was was purely material, and he strove to discount it by calm anticipation. He was not afraid, but he was terribly afraid of being afraid. In spite of

all his efforts the sense of impending catastrophe growing upon him numbed his brain into an unreasoning apprehension of ill.

The party had now reached the scene of the last evening's vigil; where the wounded panther had entered the jungle a dull brown smear on the side of a teak-sapling marked his passage. Here the four Gonds were bidden to halt on the fire-line until summoned. Attended by the orderly and the Ratia, the Assistant Commissioner set about following up the trail. In this there was little difficulty, for blood-stains lay thick upon the withered leaves; but the three moved with caution. Open though the jungle was at its fringe, the red sandstone boulders cropped plentifully through the thin soil, providing ample cover for a wounded beast of prey. Gradually, as the undergrowth grew denser, the progress of the trackers slackened. At a momentary break in the trail the old orderly broke the silence in an agitated whisper. "Sahib," he murmured, "this is an evil place. Let the Presence be guided by my advice and send for buffaloes that they may beat the jungle hereabouts, for thus would i-Smith Sahib and Thomson Sahib drive out many a wounded panther from even such a jungle as this." The Ratia laughed. "There are scarce a score of buffaloes," he said, "in ten villages round, and to collect them would take us till evening. Why should we take all this trouble for a mangy panther when we have two guns and a spear?"

The Assistant Commissioner straightened his back and gazed keenly into the jungle to his front. Over the tops of the young teaks he saw a single shoot of bamboo drooping gracefully, with light green foliage a-shimmer in the sunlight. The spot was not twenty paces from where he stood.

Then for the first time in his life he began to be horribly afraid. He had read of fear in books and talked of it in jest, and as he recognised its symptoms in himself (the cold, rough skin and the strange weakness at the back of his knees) he was filled with passionate self-loathing. Under pretence of searching for the trail he bent double lest his cowardice might show itself in his face. He knew well where the beast would be found, trail or no trail. His feet, heavy as lead, took him with torturing slowness toward the bamboos. His brain was a surging sea of conflicting feelings. "Send for the buffaloes," clamoured his baser self with stunting persistency. "Remember that a man has not a ghost of a chance against a wounded panther in thick jungle. And what glory is there in being mauled? Send for the buffaloes." But from the more inward depths of consciousness rose other clearer voices, the protests of his training and education, and, more than all, of his pride of race. "If you shirk walking the beast up yourself," said these voices, "you stand self-condemned. You elected to play a dangerous game, with the odds at first enormously in your favour. Now that the game bids fair to go against you, you would back out of it like an undisciplined child, or seek to restore the former odds by unfair means. It is the risk that makes the game worth playing; without it, it is butchery. And will you, a white man in authority, armed with a double-barrelled rifle, turn from an encounter which the half-clad, undersized native at your back is ready, armed only with a spear, to face? You would have few to witness your disgrace but,—you could never shoot in these jungles again. You had the Ratia flogged yesterday; could you have taken the punishment in silence and harboured no resent-

ment against its author? Will you now show yourself the inferior of such a man? You cannot, you dare not! You must face the music!"

The old orderly was by now lagging considerably in the rear. Stooping and peering in the dark green shade, the Englishman followed closely by the Ratia advanced step by step into the bamboo grove. In the mind of the former an immense impatience began to obscure all powers of thought and reason. There was now no question of retreat; but, so that the end came quickly, he had almost ceased to care in whose favour the affair might terminate. There was blood on the ground at his feet,—fresh red blood—and a little further on there was quite a pool of the same horrible colour. The end must be very near now.

"Sahib, Sahib," pleaded a low voice at his elbow, "look to the right."

The Assistant Commissioner looked, and for an instant his heart stopped beating. Scarce three paces from his feet crouched and swayed a dying panther, gathering with a tremendous effort all his remaining forces for a final spring. Blood dropped from the half open mouth and quivering lower jaw, and the white teeth were smeared with crimson. In the beast's eyes there burned such an awful glare of hate and mortal agony that as the Englishman threw the rifle to his shoulder he turned his head away, faint and sick. As the report rang out, the beast in silence leaped full

at the man's chest. The latter, dashed with fearful violence to the ground, his rifle hurled far from his hand, lay still beneath him. Then one ran up swiftly from behind and thrust the beast off the body with a tasselled spear, pinning the feebly writhing creature to the earth until its struggles ceased.

"The Sahib," said the orderly after a close examination of the yet unconscious man, "must have struck his head against this root and thus he has lost his senses. He has also a shallow bite on his shoulder."

The little Gonds made two litters out of canes and creepers and carried home the slayer and the slain. For two days the Assistant Commissioner lay in a high fever; on the morning of the third he saw the world once more with discerning eyes. The flies of the tent were fastened back, for it was a hot morning. At the door sat his bearer, fast asleep, and a black and white kid roamed restlessly over the matting by the bed. Without, under the mango tree, two natives were engaged in rubbing a pegged-out panther skin, singing monotonously the while.

The bearer woke with a start and brought his master quinine. He salaamed profoundly. "Next time," he said, "the Presence will send for buffaloes."

"Ah," said the Assistant Commissioner faintly. But next time he did not!

C. P.

THE PICTURE POST-CARD.

THE superior person despises the picture post-card. He declares that he can see neither rhyme nor reason in collecting cards with not very perfect photographs of places where the collector has never been nor ever expects to go. The superior person has said this of various other whims. He declared much the same thing in respect to stamp-collecting. Like Judas on a famous occasion, he alleged that it was a waste of money, and like Judas in this also, he further declared that he could indicate a far better method in which the money could be spent. He has also attacked the collecting of beetles and butterflies, and when the pathetic time has arrived for the sale of such collections, possibly by auction, he has said that the ludicrously small prices which the treasures attract are exactly the estimate which he would put on them.

The fact is that the superior person entirely fails to see that it is not the collecting in itself which is the charm but the imaginative sense which lies behind the collection. For example, the collector of picture-cards, be he never so prosaic, can hardly look over a well-arranged collection without feeling something of the sentiment which inspired Dr. Johnson when he said that he regarded travelling as the mere regulator of the imagination. It was the imagination which provided the facts; travelling merely checks the mental array of facts with the realities. Consequently the collector of picture-cards, if the hobby be carried out with the intelligence which it deserves, is constantly, in the imagination, traversing the whole

world; and since we must admit with Napoleon that it is the imagination which governs the human race, we are compelled to pay one tribute to this humble pastime, and that tribute is that the follower of this little enterprise is dealing with a faculty, whether he know it or not, which is of immense importance to the world.

Bailey, in that curious poem, *Festus*, declares of the imagination that it deals with another and a better world. We can say much the same thing of the amusement which we are considering. The young man or the young woman who gathers picture post-cards is directing his or her imagination to another, though we cannot say a better, world. But in days when narrowness and insularity are a positive combination of dangers, when the routine of ordinary lives is growing more dull by reason of the advances of science, when bit by bit the possibilities of the exercise of discretion or judgment are removed from the lives of thousands and instead there is the daily attending to this little shuttle or that little entry in log-books and ledgers, we should not too readily condemn any fashion which acts in the direction of broadening interests and awaking enthusiasm for what may appear to some of us to be trifles but to them are the occasions of delight and of forgetfulness of irksome drudgeries.

In fact it would appear that it is not merely accidental that the picture post-card should triumph in what we call the artisan classes. It is of the fancy as it affects the wage-earners

and their dependents that we have to speak. Cases are known where women in very humble life have spent their pence in the collection of picture-cards which it would be difficult to call either beautiful or attractive. The colouring might frighten us; the difference between the picture and the place it pretends to portray might arouse in us a sense of protest. But what other means is there for that vast class which we call the Million to acquire collections of art products? What means is there, other than the dream-travelling which is engendered by the picture post-card, for those whose bounds of travelling are the summer watering-place and the Bank Holiday picnic, to know that far from England there are places of rare beauty and of very living interest? There is an education in travelling,—we have the authority of Lord Chesterfield for the statement,—but for those who cannot travel, to whom even the excellent arrangements of the Polytechnic are a luxury beyond their reach, the picture post-card would seem to supply a need for which philanthropists and social reformers have long sought.

There is herein a lesson for those who, with the best of intentions have founded picture galleries and museums for the people. It would appear to be proved by the taste in picture-cards that the individual prefers his own little picture gallery. Be it never so humble there is nothing like having a thing for one's own. Goethe would be horrified, of course, for he declared that the gratification of the imagination without the exercise of taste according to some canons of art was the most fearful thing which could be imagined. Let us admit the fact; but then we come face to face with another question. Is it better that men and women should be interested in what they regard as things of

beauty, that they should gather and preserve and treasure them, or that they should aspire to critical canons of taste which, even if they adopt them, they cannot understand?

It is further remarkable that this movement has developed of its own accord. There is a village in Lancashire where owing to the enterprise of a small shop-keeper there are available all manner of picture-cards. We are informed by the very intelligent man who presides over the establishment that he considered that it was worth his while to visit London in order that he might obtain the best cards which were in the market. He came home armed with thousands of cards, pictures of continental cities, pictures of scenes so far away as Japan, reproductions of some of the world's greatest pictures, and portraits of some of the world's greatest men. He had sold out his stock in a fortnight, and he declares that there is not a house in the district where there is not something in the way of a collection. The villagers exchange their collections with each other for the purpose of examination, and the fact that this or that person has come across a particular treasure flies through the district much as the news of the discovery of a huge nugget of gold flies through the Klondykes. It is something in the way of a corrective in a materialistic day. The humble collectors have not even the quasi-materialism of the stamp-collector, since there is not the slightest prospect that their little collection will ultimately be of priceless worth. But the simple and not unfriendly rivalry has its interest, and the drudgery of the day and the grey sameness of life are forgotten. There is neither Government nor Municipal encouragement for the pastime. None seems to offer prizes. There are no committees to encourage it, nor are rates

levied on the people for their education in this matter. In spite of all that has been done to foster other delights, the delight in art, science, literature, the fact remains that without any extraneous aid the delight in the collection of picture post-cards has grown to such dimensions that its extent would hardly be believed by those who have not had the opportunity to see it at first hand.

The caviller points out that the first aim of the picture post-card is overlooked. It was devised to transmit to our friends from us who are busy travelling, and too busy for the duty of letter-writing, a picture of the place where we are. The very idea of purchasing these cards in a small shop in a village fills him with horror. What is the use of going to Venice and sending a legitimate picture-card thence, when a shop, which deals by right with sweetmeats and tobacco, is able to sell for a penny as good a card of St. Mark's as any we could find in the city of the lagoons? But, by way of answer, let us point out that it was the original idea of the card which has opened the eyes of the world to the sense of beauty in pictures, and it is not at all antagonistic to the original idea, rather is it the contrary, if the people in their thousands, having no friends in their social circle who are likely to travel, choose to supply the need at the small and insignificant emporium to which we have referred. Indeed there are three stages in the process. First there is the stage where the person who travels buys cards for his own delectation in after years. Then there is the second class, the happy recipients of cards from friends who are seeing the distant places with eyes near akin to their own. The humbler people with whom we are dealing are not able to travel, neither

are they able to receive the designs from friends who travel. The next best thing is to purchase them for themselves, for we may be sure that every lover of the picture post-card would far prefer the receipt of a card, genuinely through the post from an intimate, than to purchase it. It is under the force of grim necessity that they adopt the latter course.

It is no less remarkable that there should spring up a community of interest between those who have adopted the harmless amusement of making a collection of such treasures on more or less scientific lines. It is said that a journal is to be begun to link together the whole community. This is the normal procedure in English life to-day, and whenever half a dozen Englishmen think in common they are pretty sure to establish an organ for the articulation of their demands, their needs, their aspirations. No doubt the collector of picture-cards, like the owners of bicycles and motor cars, will find before very long that he has grievances, and the organ in question will enable him to give expression to those grievances and to lead others to realise how acute those grievances really are, though indeed they never felt them before. It is the prerogative of a Free Press. But be it said that even so the result of this combining of what are in essence individual pastimes will be to raise the standard, for it is certain that nothing has raised the standard of amateur photography, for example, more than the excellent journals which set out to assist the amateur and to teach him to what heights he can aspire. The same will happen to the collector of picture-cards. Away in his little village he has no opportunity of hearing of the purchases which might be made. He knows nothing of the wonderful cards which are to be found in some portion of the

world of which he has never heard, or of which the keeper of his local shop is unaware. But by means of the interchange of thought which would be possible in a journal such as we have described he will be safeguarded from undue self-elation. The mountains to be scaled will hold him from pride when he reaches the top of the local hillock.

But there is more to be said on this point. We have just been looking at an admirable collection kept by a collier, of all men. This collection has charms of its own. The cards are placed in the album in such a way as to leave room for extracts from the newspapers to be pasted in, or for written comments to be inserted. He has a collection of some hundreds of Paris views alone, and under each picture there is a careful little note, describing the scene so far as he could obtain a description from the books in the local library, and giving brief references to historical and other facts which might bear on the interest of the picture. Every event of the French Revolution which he could locate is indicated in red ink, and there is a grim suitability in the choice of the colour which, no doubt, was not altogether unconscious. This man admits that prior to taking up this hobby he knew nothing of history, but he adds, with pardonable pride, that "he has learned a lot." We can well believe it; we can well believe, too, that his passion for carrying out this excellent idea will grow according as he adds to his collection, and when we point out that very probably he will not rest eventually until he actually goes to Paris to see the places for himself, and that when he does go he will take the "seeing eye and the heart which understands," we are paying the profoundest compliment to a

hobby which many are disposed to dismiss with a sigh as a mere waste of time and money. Added to this the one fact that the man in question has used a local library, and used it with interest and delight, whereas hitherto he regarded it as a place for the schoolmaster and one or two book-worms, we are claiming still one more point, and an important point, in its favour.

The most remarkable fact of all is that the prophets who declared that the fancy was utterly ephemeral seem one and all to be wrong. True the same was said of stamp-collecting, and this amusement is probably more in favour than ever it was. But none could have prophesied, a few years back that the rage for picture post-cards would grow to such a pitch that some of the best artists are content to design them, some of the best printing firms are eager to excel in the production of them, and in villages far away from any particular loveliness of Nature there are those who are delighting in scenes which their eyes will never behold, witnessing them through the medium of the picture post-card. We are informed on excellent authority that the sales of these simple artistic devices in the Lancashire industrial districts alone is to be numbered by hundreds of thousands, a factor in social life the importance of which should not be minimised. Not least important is the further fact that the art of picture-printing is receiving an impetus which will do more to develop it than any influence which has so far been exercised upon it. The collector is by his nature an aspirant for the very best that can be produced, and when the rivalry takes the form of producing that which will impress those collectors who are day by day improving in the quality of their taste, we can well see that

there are yet fields for enterprise which offer opportunities far beyond any of which we could have dreamed only a few years ago.

One might well wonder whether something could not be done to co-ordinate this wide-spread attachment to the little novelty. Would something in the direction of an exhibition of picture post-cards, as collected by genuine amateurs, avail anything in encouraging an improved taste? There are flower-shows, where prizes are given for the best products, and there are photographic exhibitions where the cultivation of the art of photography is similarly encouraged. Might not a public function of the type be introduced with good effect in respect to the collection, assortment, and arrangement (not to speak of the adding of elucidatory notes) of the picture post-card? Much has of late years been done to encourage the Masses to employ their leisure time in seemly and fruitful ways. Mr. Carnegie has encouraged the libraries, and though his action has again and again been criticised, the fact remains that he has put into the possession of countless thousands the literature of the ages. Might not something be done to assist this new fancy, to lead it into channels where it might be more desirably encouraged? Or, and this would be of far more promise, local committees might take up some such work, and acknowledge thereby

the industry, the enthusiasm, the initial love of art, all of which are manifested by the devotion of the true collector. One thing is certain, and that is that in our day we cannot afford to overlook any opportunity for cultivating the imagination of the people. Macaulay said of one man's imagination that it had the wings of an ostrich; it could run but not soar. Dare we suggest that if any effort on the part of the well-wishers of the people were to enable their imaginations to soar and not merely to run along the surface of the earth, the benefits to a world where the tendencies and temptations towards that which is sordid and earthly are almost overpowering would be incalculable? We cannot afford to despise the leisure of the people. It is that which removes the brooding which makes discontent, the introspection which gives birth to sullenness, the lack of ambition which breeds apathy to all the whisperings of the "things which are more excellent." We cannot work revolutions, nor have we a magician's wand by which we can transfuse life, which is beset by the cares of the irksome day, into the rich and full life of the sturdy intellect and the insighted mind and the gracious heart. But we can do the little things which make in directions the final purpose of which we cannot and dare not attempt to foresee.

THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY.

I HAVE travelled now over all the great continental railway systems that are already completed, the trans-European (which is too much a matter of course to be interesting), the trans-American, and the trans-Asian, and I fully expect, if my doctor is reasonably successful in prolonging life, to add a trans-African journey to my experiences. When it is once built, the line from Cape to Cairo will easily rank first in its romantic interest, its daring achievement in piercing that baffling dark continent which even these days of exploration have not robbed of its mystery, perhaps even in its engineering feats, though the palm for them rests at present with America, with its precipitous descent on the Pacific side of the Rocky Mountains; but for sheer stupendous length, neither of them will be able to vie with the Siberian railway, and I acknowledge reluctantly that so far, in spite of those short miles of switchback to the American shore of the Pacific, the prize for railway enterprise lies, not with the English but with the Tartar race.

I travelled out to the East by the ordinary water-route, enjoying the adventure of a cyclone on my way, and after a pleasant journey through Japan, found myself at Shan-hai-kwan and from thence prepared to return to Western civilisation by rail. Eclipsed by its gigantic neighbour, the railway line that runs through Shan-hai-kwan to Niuchwang, built by British capital and under British supervision, has hardly met with the attention it deserves. It is a splendid

line, better laid even than the trans-Siberian which almost baffles fault-finding, finely bridging river after river which here form the chief obstacles, with their severe yearly floods. I left Shan-hai-kwan on a Saturday in the very early morning, and a twelve hours' run brought me to the terminus opposite Niuchwang. The Tah-ling-hur I crossed about noon by a temporary bridge, a bridge that has to be taken to pieces and removed every twelve months before the oncoming of the rains, which soon swell the river into a raging sea overturning all but the strongest structures; but a permanent bridge was well advanced towards completion and by now must have taken the place of its wooden predecessor. It was almost dusk when I left the train and embarked on the ferry boat which was to carry me across the Leao to the treaty-port of Niuchwang. It was a fine stream of immense span from bank to bank, flowing with a strong, eager current and breaking here and there into tiny waves which caught the last, rose-coloured reflections from the rapidly darkening sky. A grey, shadowy sea lay on one side of me; on the other, a great fleet of junks slipped silently away up the river, grotesque in outline, but in that dim light wearing an air of unreality, of mystery, and I know not what of the glamour of the Orient took me for an instant by the throat. Life was serious enough, however, to those junks crowding up the river together and not daring to part company even in the interests of competitive commerce; for the upper reaches of the Leao swarm with

pirates, and the only hope of safety for these peaceful merchant-men (for the Chinese trader is by no means bellicose) lies in travelling in such numbers as to render attack formidable by sheer weight of resistance.

I left my boat at the Niuchwang quay and went on to Russia-town which is the terminus of the Manchurian railway, and there I took the train on Sunday at half-past six in the morning. I was the only Englishman on the journey, and shared my coupé with a German, a pleasant, intelligent man who, fortunately for me, spoke English. We were travelling second-class, as no one on the Siberian railway travels first except those who have their tickets paid for them by somebody else; and as the second is just as good as the first, and carries with it the same privileges, the only difference between the two that I could find was that the second-class carriages were fitted up to take four passengers instead of two. The German and I approached the Chief of the train, an official who acts as general overseer and is a sort of Czar of a little rolling kingdom, and offered him twenty roubles to keep the carriage to ourselves; but he demanded one full fare, and so we decided to trust to luck, which seemed easily on our side as there were several empty coupés. But at Kharbin, where the passengers from Vladivostock joined the train, his outraged majesty presented us with a travelling companion. He was a Frenchman, an Alsatian, who to our joy refused point-blank to occupy a carriage with two others while there were other compartments, and tenantless, on the train. The argument soon grew warlike, but it ended in the Alsatian carrying his point and bundling his traps out of our sight. But he had made an enemy of the Chief who came back complaining bitterly (and to us of all people!) of

the insults he had been subjected to by "that brute of an Englishman," for along the Siberian railway any man who makes a fuss and gives trouble, however much within his rights, must of necessity be English. This assumption that the British must be at the bottom of every fracas was a revelation to me, and I was struck again and again on my journey with the hatred and suspicion with which the Russians view our every action. Not that I personally was ever treated with discourtesy; as an individual I met with the same attention as my fellow-passengers, but the instinct of alienation from the English as a people sprang to light on many an occasion, and often quite needlessly. I remember a German who was visiting us one day calling the attention of the Chief to the embarrassment caused by the officials understanding no language except Russian, although this railway might almost be looked upon as an international concern, and as such, an interpreter at least might have been expected to be aboard. Our despot turned upon him at once. "Ah, you're English!" he cried, cringing. "Well now, suppose I were travelling from London to Edinburgh, would I find anybody to translate for me? Wouldn't I have to speak your language? So it is here. When you are in Russia, you must come on Russian legs, and speak the Russian tongue, or else you can stop away." So it is that there are no interpreters on Russian railways, that the staff speak no language but Russian, except the chiefs of the trains themselves who add a passable knowledge of French to their duties, and it was in that language that we conversed.

The travelling by the Siberian Express is extremely good; indeed it compares favourably with American travelling which is generally supposed

to be the acme of comfort. No great speed is attained, twenty miles an hour being the average, but even so the smoothness of the line is surprising, and on that journey of fifteen days' duration the only jolting I suffered was between Queenborough and London. I travelled in a corridor train, fitted up with electric light, with bedding of passable quality which was occasionally changed, and with good washing arrangements, though it is necessary to bring one's private soap and towel on board. Plenty of luggage, in fact a heavy porter's load, is allowed in the carriage, though tin cases of any description must be relegated to a van, but as I travelled light I was able to have all my belongings with me. A dining-car was also attached to the train; the fare was plentiful and of its kind good, but as that kind was Russian, everything swam in grease, and a squeamish person might have got off rather uncomfortably. Every day was served a Russian soup (the name must be pronounced in exactly the same way as an ordinary man sneezes) of boiled bones, with plenty of cabbage in it and a great slab of meat at the bottom. This dish was satisfying, to say the least of it, and was quite a meal in itself. I always made shift with the roast beef, beef-steak, or *entrecôtes*, one of which dishes was served every day, though the meat must have been cut from the ribs, not of an ox but, of an old horse, to judge by the toughness. The waiting in the dining-car is the worst thing on the Russian trains. The waiters speak nothing but their own language and have no idea of punctuality. I thought myself lucky if my meal was served half-an-hour after I had ordered it, and then it only arrived if I had solicited my man's favour with a rouble. A rouble in fact was the one emollient that made

the wheels of our life go round at all, and it had to be repeated in judicious doses.

Our train being the special express, it kept very well up to time throughout the journey, but ordinary trains are most unpunctual, and are shunted off to sidings without compunction and on the least provocation. Russians, from what I have seen of them and especially the Russian peasantry, have no idea of time, and in this respect are thoroughly Oriental in their habit of mind. When they travel, they take all their household belongings with them and entrench themselves in their compartment for a long stay. Their food they may supplement from the buffets along the line, but the greater part they carry with them, and if asked when they expect to reach their destination, they only answer with an uncomprehending stare. Ask a Russian what o'clock it is, and he will look at you in surprise. "What sort of fellow is this?" he seems to be thinking. "Of what earthly good can it be to him what time it is?" Or he will suspect vaguely that in some way unknown to him your question has some dark political meaning, so that no matter which of these two trains of ideas starts in his head, he will answer after a pause that he does not know. But I have left my train at Kharbin all this time and must rejoin it.

Kharbin is as much a mushroom town as any in America and is entirely built of wood, which after all is an improvement on the biscuit-tins of Kimberley. There are no made roads but separating one line of houses from another lies sometimes a slough of despond and sometimes the dry bed of a mountain torrent, and to pass through, or over, either sort of highway is an experience never to be forgotten. Kharbin must be a town of some thirty

thousand inhabitants and twenty-five thousand soldiers. Soldiers indeed are ubiquitous, patrolling the railway line from end to end, and massed in barracks near the towns, and the most perfect order is preserved every where within reach of the steam-engine. The passengers from Vladivostock came to swell our numbers here, and among them were two British ladies who had been most courageously making an extended tour in the East on nothing but their own language and a smattering of French spoken with a broad Irish accent; but for them I should have been the only representative of our country among a cosmopolitan crew. All along our route through Manchuria it was impossible not to be struck by the apparent prosperity of the Chinese. There were little villages dotted thickly about in every direction, with tilled fields around each, and the populous nature of the country was emphasised afterwards in my mind by the uninhabited wilds of Siberia. To all appearance the Chinese thrive as contentedly under the rule of the Foreign Devils as under their own Heavenly dynasty; but they are certainly among the most difficult people to understand, their point of view being so entirely different from ours that it becomes invisible, and I doubt if they are or can ever be quite intelligible to a Western mind. I remember one incident at Singapore during the Boxer rising that brought me into closer fellow sympathy with them than before, and made me think they possessed a fair share of grim humour, though the reputed experts on their character deny them that human quality. A warship (an Italian warship I think it was) had called in at the port for coal, and her bunkers were filled by Chinese coolies, working overtime that she might sail again

at the first possible moment for the scene of the trouble. As the cruiser steamed out of the harbour, John Pigtail ranged up into line to speed her on her way to Tientsin, and slowly, without the shadow of a smile, each man drew his hand significantly across his throat.

Beyond Kharbin we ran into the steppe country, that most solemn scenery on the earth with its clean, uninterrupted sweep of horizon from pole to pole. Passing through these level stretches, the landscape broke up into fine hills with rounded tops, called the Khingans, which, after the precipitous heights of India, it is difficult to designate as mountains. They reach a very passable elevation, however, and the varied outline of green and often wooded hills, and of deep valleys through which a wide stream inevitably ran, was rarely pleasing to the eye after the awe-inspiring distances of the steppe. There was never a tunnel to pass through on this gigantic railway from Port Arthur to the Urals, but the train climbed up the even-sloping hill in wide zigzags while I, and most of the passengers for that matter, glad of an excuse to vary the monotony of the journey and to escape from the jar of the reversing stations, avoided the long detour by cutting across the points of the zigzag and clambering straight up the mountain side, to join our carriages again at the summit. On reaching Manchurie station we passed into nominal Russian territory and found ourselves at once hopelessly confused as to the time. Up till then we had used ordinary Central Manchurian time, but now St. Petersburg time became the law; and so it happened that though we reached Manchurie at seven in the morning of one day, we left it at a quarter to three of the night before.

It is almost with a shock that one passes from Manchuria to Siberia, so great is the difference of outlook. While in the former there is a close population, in the latter there is an utter dearth of human inhabitants. The towns lie about a thousand miles apart and between them is hardly a vestige of occupation. From time to time is a roadside station, where the engine takes in water, and where a couple of railway men live in unenvied loneliness, with perhaps two or three peasant families scattered down the line on one side or the other, who boarded the train with offers of cheese, cream, and wild strawberries; but except for these, solitude reigned as undefiled as when the world began. Save for the tiny patches of cultivation here and there near the railway, the hand of man had never touched these vast stretches of country, and hour upon hour we passed through lovely scenery, forests of firs and silver birches, low hills and shallow valleys, rivulets, and flowers,—flowers everywhere, flowers farther than the straining eye could reach, flowers up to the waste frozen marshes of the North. For miles and miles the flowers rioted in rich confusion of colour; almost all the Himalayan varieties were here represented, and as we stopped from time to time to take in water I would step out of the carriage and pick great bunches, there to my hand, of peonies pink and white, of purple irises and clematis, of yellow china lilies and wild white roses, of double ranunculi in every shade of tint. My German companion and I passed half our day at the window; but even this paradise of colour grew confusing after a time, and we were glad to turn our eyes from the bewildering panorama and rest them with the quieter pleasures of a book and, still better, of chess.

Our games of chess were the signal for all the passengers to assemble in our carriage as spectators, and it was on the first day of this informal levee that, the sun being unpleasantly hot even for Siberia, we were glad to get rid of our coats and play in our shirt-sleeves. But our undress shocked some good lady, who complained to the Chief of the train, and presently he arrived to say, with much beating about the bush, that of course it was all right,—but he had heard,—in fact we were not dressed according to Russian ideas,—and, to put it shortly, we must either put on our coats or shut the door of our carriage. One of our audience, a German, was very indignant at what he called an assault on the liberties of man. "Why," he expostulated, "this is the fashion in their country. They appear in that costume when they play tennis before the Queen of England herself, and what is good enough for Queen Alexandra is good enough for a railway official." Our Sultan shrugged his shoulders and at once put the German down as my fellow-countryman. He said he did not know what fashions the English Queen allowed or not, and he did not care. He only knew that while we were in Russia we must be Russian in fashion, and in Russia it was indecent for a man to appear in his shirt-sleeves, and so to put on our coats we were obliged. I dressed in knickerbockers after that, and though several people looked askance at my stockings, nothing was said openly against my attire; and as I felt it was good for their souls to gain some wider ideas on the subject of clothes I remained staunch to this costume.

We reached Myssovaia on Lake Baikal in a thick sea-fog, which prevented us seeing much of our surroundings, and chilled us through to the bone in spite of our heaviest

overcoats. Our train ran alongside the jetty, and bidding farewell to our god on wheels we went on board the *ANGARA*, a fine boat with the snout bows necessary for breaking through the heavy ice which forms over this inland sea in the winter, and crossing over in her to Baikal Station, we took a fresh train and came on to Irkutsk where a halt was called, and we all swarmed out of our prison, welcoming any diversion. On the platform I spied a peasant woman carrying a baby and a huge bouquet of the flowers we had lately been passing, and the two Irish ladies at once coveted so much sweetness. How to supply their wishes, however, was another matter. I tried French with no result; I held out some silver on the palm of my hand and pointed to the flowers with the other, but the woman turned coldly away. At last a thought struck me. Snatching up some fruit from a stall close by, for which I flung down its probable value in kopecks, I thrust it into the child's hand, and at this at last the mother smiled and scanned me with interest. Instantly I lifted the bouquet from her hand and smiled at her in turn; and quickly now she seized my meaning and pressed back upon me both flowers and fruit with many bright nods and eager gestures, until it was with difficulty that I prevented the child from being robbed of its spoils.

Irkutsk, like most of the large towns along the line, is well laid out and lighted, with many handsome stone buildings. Its next neighbour, a thousand miles further on, is a shipping centre with great wharves and plenty of river traffic during the summer months, by way of the Arctic Ocean from the White Sea. But exports from Siberia must be a negligible quantity. The peasants raise no more than enough for their

own personal wants, and any army in the Far East must be fed entirely by rail from Europe. It was in this connection that I observed the remarkable dearth of rolling-stock on this strategic Russian line. Everything seemed sacrificed to passenger and troop service; and if in war the Russian army on the Pacific seaboard is to depend for the necessities of life and strife upon the Siberian railway alone, there must ensue a very serious state of things, compared to which the difficulties of our transport in the Boer war will be as nothing. There is one commodity in which Siberia is wealthy, and that is horse-flesh. All over those wonderful steppes herds of ponies browse, stout hardy little beasts, an invaluable asset in time of war. From time to time we came upon fair quantities of stolid cattle, but the ponies were everywhere, now nibbling demurely at the grass, now with a mad flourish of hoofs galloping off to a little distance, there to turn and watch us through their wind-blown manes. Nor can I pass from Siberia's equine riches without mentioning her equally ubiquitous mosquitoes. I have not been in the Klondyke, but I am confident that the venomous mid-Asian variety of mosquito must be hard to beat. The way-side residents never seemed to stray abroad without enveloping their face and hands in thick green veils, and if by mischance one of these agile pests gained entrance to our carriage, a period of restlessness and activity supervened until our tormentor had paid for its boldness with its life.

Day by day we travelled steadily westward. Troop trains passed us continually on their way to Manchuria; six a day was the average that swung by, while about once a day a convict train, sometimes by itself, sometimes attached to the rear

of an ordinary passenger train, hurried inexorably past. These convicts seemed to be confined in the usual third-class carriages, but the windows were heavily barred, and at every stopping place the Cossack guard formed up on both sides of the train, with drawn swords in their hands, even the women's and children's compartments being hedged about by that barrier of naked steel. As we ran into Penza, we found the whole town *en fête*, bidding farewell to the 123rd regiment which was entraining for the Far East. The eager crowds and hearty shouts put me irresistibly in mind of the days when we had sent out our soldiers to South Africa with just such confident affection and pride. Here, in the heart of another vast Empire, men of alien blood, who had hardly heard of the Transvaal, were giving way to the self-same emotions and expressing them in the self-same way, and for a moment I shut my eyes and imagined myself in England. My German companion, taking me in tow, crossed the metals and spoke to the soldiers as they hung out of the windows in excited batches. "Where are you going?" he asked, and presently one who understood French struggled to the fore and, with an indescribable grin upon his face, replied grimly, "We are going to evacuate Manchuria!"

On this side of the Urals the scenery was again greatly changed from that of Siberia. The waste steppes gave place to vistas of corn land, though the villages were still few and far between. Nor are the peasants as a rule directly interested in the corn-crop, which is chiefly to the benefit of the landed proprietors who leave the cultivation in the hands of agents, and these frequently import their labour at harvest-time and use machinery to the widest extent possible. Instead of cream and straw-

berries, as in Siberia, the peasants here bring wax figures of convicts in chains to the trains to dispose of, and quantities of lace, for lacemaking in these parts attains the rank of an industry. Great works, principally iron works, have sprung up in these towns under M. Witte's encouraging hand, and samples of the manufactures are exhibited on stalls at all the stations where the principal trains pause for breath. But of trustworthy news there is an utter dearth. Russian posts are sent, not by express but, by slow train, for who, except a mad Englishman, needs to read the news or to know the time? At Tchelabinsk I had the curiosity to buy a halfpenny London paper of a week old for the equivalent of twopence, and found all the information, both of the Near and of the Far East, carefully smudged out.

I was now nearing my journey's end, but I had yet one amusing experience before me ere I left Russia and its fashions. The passport I had received at Niuchwang I had never had occasion to have viséd, as I had been careful not to sleep a single night away from the train, with the purpose of avoiding any encounter, however trivial, with the formidable Russian police. But now that I was at the frontier I found that, by this very circumstance, I had never obtained permission to leave the country. The gendarme at Alexandrovo, who was looking at my passport, evidently thought me a suspicious character, and as he had no words of any language with which I was familiar, and I had no words of Russian, we could not arrive at a diplomatic settlement. At last he gave me to understand by signs that I was free to go about the town for a little, while he looked into the matter, and when I ventured to return after a short walk, he met me with a cleared brow and these words

in English, dropped slowly like stones into a deep well—"You—may—go." I asked for my passport, but here our understanding ended, and he waved me to the train where I was at last reluctantly obliged to take my seat. Then, just as the hour for starting struck, a small corps of police boarded the train, distributed to each his passport, with permission to depart, and as the engine got into motion, they

swung themselves off the footboard and we were free. Whatever may be said of some phases of Russian rule, the thoroughness of their police service can never be called in question. They keep their eye on a man so long as he is within the confines of their Empire; and when he wishes to leave, they see to it that he really does leave, and does not get left behind by any mistake.

I. DOBBIE.

A MEMORY.

A COTTAGE on a sea-crag stood—
It was a poet's home;
Behind it,—moorland solitude,
Beneath,—the Atlantic foam.

'Twas here he saw the marble hill
In sunset's purple dyed,
Here watched the far-descended rill
Fall to the plunging tide;

Marked the wave-wandering snowy wing
Sweep in its pride of power,
And gladdened, as the birds of Spring
Piped round his bloom-girt bower.

Time's happy lights, its troubled shade
In his rich pages throng;
Vision and dream and mystery made
The splendour of the song.

He vanished, but his parting bore
A finer mood to men,
More music to the murmuring shore,
More verdure to the glen,—

Vanished, in fellowship to range
With the great bards of old,
Who feed earth's temple-fires, and change
The grey of life to gold.

JOSEPH TRUMAN.

THE TRADITION OF ORATORY.

It is one of the conventions of the age to say that parliamentary oratory is a lost art. "What a drivelling House of Commons!" Who has not heard the exclamation, or something tantamount to it, as the grumbler flings down the morning paper in disdain after glancing at the report of the proceedings in Parliament. "The age of oratory is gone. There's not an orator in the present House of Commons. The great men of the past are succeeded, as Edmund Burke would say, by 'sophisters, economists and calculators.'" So he goes on, growing positively rhetorical, "Oh, for the majestic eloquence of Pitt, the profound reasoning of Burke, the passion and fire of Fox, the brilliant imagery of Sheridan. How impressive, how thrilling, parliamentary debates must have been in the days of those masters of eloquence!"

The fame of Chatham and Pitt, Fox, Burke, and Sheridan, as orators rests mainly upon contemporary opinion. The note of panegyric is indeed highly strung in these eulogiums. "Chatham's eloquence," said Henry Grattan, "resembled sometimes the thunder and sometimes the music of the spheres." We read also that "as a parliamentary orator Pitt had no superior." Burke called Fox, "the most brilliant and accomplished debater that the world ever saw." Of Burke himself we are told that he "soared on the majestic wing of a gorgeous eloquence to every clime where there was a wrong to be redressed." Another piece of contemporary testimony is that, as an orator, Sheridan impressed the House

of Commons more deeply than almost any predecessor. It would seem, indeed, as if each of these orators was superior to all the others, which reminds one of the saying attributed to an Irishman,—“Every man is as good as another, and twenty times better.” The contemporaries of these statesmen, whose opinions have come down to us, seem to have lost their senses (or at least, the sense of proportion) in appraising the nature and the effects of the oratory of the period. Contemporary opinion has little weight, if any, in literature and art. The books and pictures of the past are judged by each age independently, according to its own special standards of taste and criticism. But contemporary opinion of the parliamentary oratory of the end of the eighteenth century has been accepted as conclusive, and has been repeated from generation to generation, as a sort of pontifical judgment, without being put to the test of an examination of the speeches themselves.

Macaulay is responsible for much of the fame which the parliamentary orators of the end of the eighteenth century now enjoy. As a literary artist he dealt more in glowing periods than in cold and commonplace facts, and in order to construct a striking and vivid picture improved upon even the exaggerations of tradition. How lavish he is with his colours, how prodigal of his imitable phrases, on the subject of the voice of Chatham! "His voice, even when it sank to a whisper was heard to the remotest benches, and when he strained it to its full extent the

sound rose like the swell of an organ of a great Cathedral, shook the House with its peal and was heard through the lobbies and down staircases to the Court of Requests and the precincts of Westminster Hall." How the imagination is fired, how the mind is impressed, with the might and majesty of the very look of the orator! "His play of countenance was wonderful," writes Macaulay; "he frequently disconcerted a hostile orator by a single glance of indignation and scorn." Contemporary accounts of the arrogance, impetuosity, and fierceness of the elder Pitt, are, indeed, incredible. Charles Butler in his *REMINISCENCES* tells some amazing stories, on contemporary authority, of the manner in which that orator overawed his opponents. Chief Justice Moreton once said in the House of Commons, "King, Lords, and Commons, or"—looking at the elder Pitt—"as that right honourable member would term them, Commons, Lords, and King." Pitt called the judge to order, and desired that his words be taken down, which was accordingly done by the clerk. "Bring them to me," said Pitt in his loftiest tone. By this time Moreton, we are told, was frightened out of his senses. "Sir," he stammered out, addressing the Speaker, "I am sorry to have given any offence to the right hon. member or to the House. I meant nothing. King, Lords, and Commons—Lords, King, and Commons—Commons, Lords, and King: *tria juncta in uno*. I meant nothing; indeed I meant nothing!" he piteously pleaded. The awe-inspiring and terrible Pitt arose. "I don't wish to push the matter further," said he with unexpected magnanimity. "The moment a man acknowledges his error, he ceases to be guilty. I have a great regard for the honourable member;

and as an instance of that regard I give him this advice:—whenever he means nothing I recommend him to say nothing."

Butler also relates that on another occasion Pitt, after finishing a great speech, walked out of the House at his usual slow pace. The House remained still and silent until Pitt opened the door leading to the lobby. Then a member got up and began: "I rise to reply to the honourable member . . ." Pitt turned back at once, and fixed his terrible eye on his opponent, who instantly sat down trembling and dumb. Then placing himself in his seat Pitt exclaimed, "Now let me hear what the honourable member has to say to me!" But the honourable member, intimidated no doubt by Pitt's "glance of indignation and scorn," was tongue-tied. Butler asked the person from whom he obtained this anecdote,—an eye-witness of the scene—if the House did not laugh at the ridiculous figure cut by the poor silence-stricken member. The reply was,—“No, Sir, we were all too amazed to laugh.” This is fiction, surely, though good fiction; yet Brougham tells a better story still in his *STATESMEN OF THE TIME OF GEORGE III.* It is related, he says, that once in the House of Commons the elder Pitt began a speech with the words "Sugar, Mr. Speaker," and then, seeing a smile pervade the assembly, he paused, glared fiercely around, and with a loud voice rising in its notes and swelling into vehement anger, repeated the word *sugar* three times. "Having thus quelled the House," says Brougham, "and dispelled every appearance of levity or laughter he turned round and scornfully asked:—'Who will laugh at sugar now?'" It is, of course, impossible to believe that so grotesque an incident ever happened. The elder Pitt, by all accounts, was a

bit of a bully, and a consummate actor, up to all the tricks of oratory, but he had a sense of dignity and a sense of humour; and it is unlikely that he ever played the shrewish and foolish part ascribed to him in this anecdote. But even if he had shouted "Sugar! Sugar! Sugar!" in petulant tones and swept the House with a scowl, is it not more likely that members, whose risible faculties were so easily tickled that they laughed at his opening words, "Sugar, Mr. Speaker"—when there was little cause for merriment,—would have rolled about the benches under stress of their uncontrollable mirth? That undoubtedly is what would have happened in the present House of Commons; and human nature cannot have been so entirely different in the Parliament of George the Third.

They were great orators, undoubtedly, Chatham and Pitt, Burke, Fox, and Sheridan; but when their speeches are put to the test of reading it is singular how incomprehensible is the secret of their greatness and beauty and charm. Of course, in criticising the oratory of the past, we have only the printed word to go upon; and, also, of course, oratory is much more than the printed word. Only a part and perhaps a small part of the charm of oratory can be transmitted through the agency of print. It is well known, moreover, that parliamentary reporting in the eighteenth century was both meagre and inaccurate; and in fact it was not till 1803 that the systematic publication of the debates, still popularly known as Hansard's, was recognised by Parliament. It must be remembered, also, that printed reports, however accurate, are mutilated of the voices, the looks, and the gestures of the speakers, and of other aids, subtle and evanescent, to the influence of the speeches. The elements which appeal to the ear and

eye rather than to the mind are entirely absent. The reporter cannot put the personality of the orator into his record of the speech. The greatest speaker who has ever swayed a senate, or turned the tide of a debate, cannot be the same in print as he is in the full flood of his eloquence. Yet surely the reporter should have been able to preserve some of the magical qualities and powers of the orator, surely some of his "divine afflatus" should be conveyed in his words even in print? Turn to the speeches of Chatham and Pitt, of Burke, Fox, and Sheridan, and where are the great thoughts, the profound arguments, the burning words, where the blasting invective, the withering sarcasm? Where are the lighter ornaments and graces of style, the sparkling wit, the elegant phrase, the pleasant raillery? To be sure there are passages which only the true orator could have uttered. But the impression left on the mind by the traditions of the period with respect to these "greatest orators of the English tongue," as they are generally regarded, is that they were perpetually at the boiling point of eloquence, and that they never spoke in the House of Commons without indulging in lofty and sustained outbursts of oratory. Yet as a matter of fact these five orators (judging them, be it remembered, by the printed page) would seem to have been more frequently commonplace than inspired. It is amazing that speeches so cold and spiritless could have produced the tremendous effects of which we read in contemporary records. I have gone through countless tedious pages in the hunt for the burning lava stream of Chatham's indignation, for the stately and sonorous language of Pitt, for the oriental imagination, the boundless vocabulary, the plastic, ductile style of Burke, for the passionate, impetuous and resistless eloquence of Fox,

for the wit and raillery of Sheridan, but have found in this mass of words, words, words, little of the real ore of oratory to reward my labours. Seen through the glamour of tradition, these men appear to our eyes as mighty oratorical giants. But what did Burke say of his contemporaries in the House of Commons as one night he glanced, weary-eyed, around the benches? "We live," said he, "in an age of dwarfs." Burke's outlook on things may have been unusually gloomy and desponding that night; yet it is hard to find proof that he was altogether mistaken.

Burke, himself, according to contemporary opinion, was a most tedious speaker—the dinner-bell of the House of Commons, as some wit christened him. He had no graces of manner; his gestures were awkward; his severe countenance rarely relaxed into a smile; his voice was harsh when calm, and hoarse when excited. There have been orators who concealed their physical defects of appearance or manner by the energy and passion they imparted to their delivery, but Burke, if we are to believe his contemporaries, was always stolid and wearisome. It is possible, however, that the disparagement of Burke may have been weakened, like the glorification of Chatham, Pitt, Fox, and Sheridan, by over emphasis and exaggeration. Rush, the American Minister, in his *RESIDENCE AT THE COURT OF LONDON* relates that he once asked Erskine what he thought of Burke's delivery. "It was execrable," replied that masterly forensic orator. "I was in the House of Commons when he made his great speech on American Conciliation—the greatest he ever made. I wanted to go out with the rest, but was near him and afraid to get up, so I squeezed myself down and curled under the benches like

a dog until I got to the door without his seeing me, rejoicing over my escape." It is a pity to spoil a good story, but as a matter of fact the speech was delivered in 1775, and Erskine did not enter the House of Commons until 1783. That Burke's style of speaking was dull and ineffective is, no doubt, true; and for that reason, probably, the inarticulate country squires in the House, who had not wit enough to see the powerful philosophic mind displayed even in these dreary speeches, regarded him as a dull dog. One night in 1784 (according to a story which, as it may be exaggerated like the others, I quote for what it is worth) Burke rose to speak with a bundle of papers in his hands. "I hope," said a country member despairingly, "the hon. gentleman does not mean to read that large bundle of papers and bore us with a long speech into the bargain." Burke was so irritated that he walked out of the House. "Never before," said George Selwyn who tells the story, "did I see the fable realised—a lion put to flight by the braying of an ass!"

Yet Burke was paid a singular compliment on the immediate effect of one of his speeches. Reading a debate on the war in America on February 6th, 1778, which was initiated by Burke (the galleries having been cleared of strangers for the occasion), I came across the following remarkable statement:—"Governor Johnstone said he was glad strangers were excluded during the debate, as if they had been admitted the speech of the hon. gentleman would have excited them to tear the Minister to pieces as they went out of the House." The motion moved by Burke condemned the employment of Indians against the insurgents in America. For three hours

and a half Burke dwelt in lurid phrases on the horrors which were likely to ensue from the employment in civilised warfare of savages who scalped and tortured their victims. But the encomium of Governor Johnstone was perhaps somewhat discounted by the characteristically airy retort of the Prime Minister, Lord North. "I also am glad that no strangers were admitted to-day," said he. "And why? Lest they should be worked up into indignation and horror against gentlemen on the other side of the House for declaring sentiments so contrary to those which the honour and dignity of the country demand."

The greatest of Burke's speeches is generally considered to have been the one on Conciliation with America. The report of the speech supplied by Burke himself runs to as many as thirty-two pages. It contains over thirty thousand words, and would fill fifteen columns of *THE TIMES*. It, therefore, could not have been delivered under less than five hours. It is curious, by the way, how long-winded all these great orators were. The elder Pitt was the first to indulge in long speeches in the House of Commons. After he had delivered one of these famous orations he was hailed by crowds outside the House with enthusiastic cries of—"Three hours and a half! Three hours and a half!" "Just as if a man can talk sense for three hours and a half," remarked the cynical Chesterfield who happened to pass by. Surely no orator could have held the attention of his audience for five hours—not even Bacon of whom as a Parliamentary orator Jonson said—"The fear of every man that heard him was lest he should make an end." Oh, rare Ben Jonson, what a flattering tongue thou must have had!

Rush states that Erskine concluded his story about crawling under the benches of the House of Commons to escape from the tedious and tiresome Burke, urging the Government to make peace with the American Colonies, by saying, "Next day I went to the Isle of Wight. When the speech followed me there I read it over and over again. I could hardly think of anything else. I carried it about me and thumbed it until it got like wadding for my gun." The speech, whether it was ill spoken or well spoken, has become incorporated in our literature. In truth Burke spoke, not for the House of Commons of his day, but for all time. If he could not approach Chatham or Pitt or Fox or Sheridan in stirring the emotions of his audience, how greatly he transcends them all,—when perused in the study,—in force and thought and intensity and reasoning—in all the qualities conveyed by the word intellect! Still even Burke cannot be read without a certain sense of disenchantment. "He clothed wisdom and philosophy," I read in an essay on Burke, "in the gorgeous language of our oriental imagination." There are the philosophy and wisdom, certainly; but the language is often tame and commonplace. There is no distinction in many of the sentences. But the chief fault of all his speeches is that they are too long, too diffuse, too elaborate, and are unrelieved by a sparkle of real humour or a tear of true pathos.

Burke's speeches are read as a part of English literature. Who, outside students of political history, reads Pitt's speeches in the four volumes, published in 1806, or in the more seductive pages of *HANSARD*? Pitt was a great statesman. Of that most people are convinced. But his fame as a great orator rests more

upon a few brilliant sentences from the pen of Macaulay than upon his own speeches. "He could pour forth," says Macaulay, "a long succession of round and stately periods without premeditation, without ever pausing for a word, without ever repeating a word, in a voice of silver clearness, and with a pronunciation so articulate that not a letter was slurred over." Then this great master of language proceeds by opposition, by comparison, to exalt Pitt above his contemporaries.

He had less amplitude of mind and less richness of imagination than Burke, less ingenuity than Windham, less wit than Sheridan, less perfect mastery of dialectical fence, and less of that highest sort of eloquence which consists of reason and passion fused together, than Fox. Yet the almost unanimous judgment of those who were in the habit of listening to that remarkable race of men placed Pitt, as a speaker, above Burke, above Windham, above Sheridan, and not below Fox. His declamation was copious, polished and splendid. In power of sarcasm he was probably not surpassed by any speaker ancient or modern, and of this formidable weapon he made merciless use.

Surely it is impossible for anyone who has not read Pitt's speeches to resist the convincing force of this splendid estimate of Pitt as an orator. So are reputations in oratory made. Macaulay (who, though he had never heard Pitt speak, had talked with many men who had) writes of his "voice of silver clearness." Samuel Rogers (who had often heard him, but who, it must be remembered, never said a good word of a man if he could find a bad one) said that "Pitt's voice sounded as though he had worsted in his mouth." On which side does the truth lie? May we not therefore feel a little sceptical as to the supreme qualities of Pitt's other oratorical accomplishments? I will quote one specimen

of Pitt's eloquence, and I will take it from perhaps the most elaborate and important speech which even he ever delivered in the House of Commons, that on the refusal to negotiate with France, on February 3rd, 1800. Napoleon on his inauguration as First Consul of France, December 25th, 1799, wrote personally to George the Third proposing negotiations to bring to an end the long strife between England and France. The overture was rejected by His Majesty's Government, and upon Pitt, as Prime Minister, fell the task of vindicating this policy. I give the peroration of the speech which is, I think, a good sample of Pitt at his best, illustrating his command of language and its lucidity; but which is most remarkable in that it consists of one sentence. After dwelling upon the ever increasing population, commerce and wealth of England, he proceeded:

If we compare this view of our situation with everything we can observe of the state and condition of our enemy—if we can trace him labouring under any difficulty in finding men to recruit his army, or money to pay it—if we know that in the course of the last year the most rigorous efforts of military conscription were scarcely sufficient to replace in the French armies, at the end of the campaign, the numbers which they had lost in the course of it—if we have seen that that force, then in possession of advantages which it has since lost, was unable to contend with the efforts of the combined armies—if we know that, even while supported by the plunder of all the countries which they had over-run those armies were reduced, by the confession of their commanders, to the extremity of distress and destitute not only of the principal articles of military supply, but almost of the necessities of life—if we see them now driven back within their own frontiers, and confined within a country whose own resources have long since been proclaimed by their successive Governments to be unequal either to paying or maintaining them—if

we observe that since the last revolution not one substantial or effectual measure has been adopted to remedy the intolerable disorder of their finances, and to supply the deficiency of their credit and resources—if we see through large and populous districts of France, either open war levied against the present usurpation, or evident marks of disunion or distraction, which the first occasion may call forth into a flame—if I say, Sir, this comparison be just I feel myself authorised to conclude from it, not that we are entitled to consider ourselves certain of ultimate success, not that we are to suppose ourselves exempted from the unforeseen vicissitudes of war; but considering the value of the object for which we are contending, the means for supporting the contest, and the probable course of human events, we should be inexcusable, if at this moment we were to relinquish the struggle on any grounds short of entire and complete security, that from perseverance in our efforts under such circumstances we have the fairest reason to expect the full attainment of our object, but that at all events, even if we are disappointed in our more sanguine hopes, we are more likely to gain than to lose by the continuation of the contest; that every month to which it is continued, even if it should not in its effects lead to the final destruction of the Jacobin system, must tend so far to weaken and exhaust it, as to give us at least a greater comparative security in any termination of the war; that, on all these grounds, this is not the moment at which it is consistent with our interest or our duty to listen to any proposals of negotiation with the present ruler of France; but that we are not, therefore, pledged to any unalterable determination as to our future conduct; that in this we must be regulated by the course of events; and that it will be the duty of his Majesty's Ministers from time to time to adapt their measures to any variation of circumstances, to consider how far the effects of the military operations of the allies or of the internal disposition of France correspond with our present expectations; and, on a view of the whole, to compare the difficulties of risks which may arise in the prosecution of the contest with the prospect of ultimate success, or of the degree of advantage to be derived from its farther continuance, and to be governed by the result of all these con-

siderations in the opinion and advice which they may offer to their Sovereign.

What a sentence! It recalls what Grattan said of Fox—"Every sentence came rolling like a wave of the Atlantic three thousand miles long." Richard Porson also said that, while Pitt carefully considered his sentences before he uttered them, Fox threw himself into the middle of them and left it to God Almighty to get him out again. On the contrary, Fox's sentences, in his reported speeches, are brief and pithy.

"He darted fire into his audience," says Sir James Mackintosh of Fox, in the customary strain of hyperbole. "Torrents of impetuous and irresistible eloquence swept along their feelings and convictions." Such is the contemporary estimate of Fox; he was a master of the soul-stirring eloquence of passion. There is a story told of Charles Shaw Lefevre, who was Speaker of the House of Commons in the middle of the nineteenth century, that when a small boy he was taken to the House, and after listening for a while to the shrill voice of the excited Fox, cried out, "What is that fat gentleman in such a passion about?" As I go through the cold pages of his speeches I marvel that Fox could have been,—as some of his contemporaries represent him—so fiery and so vehement about nothing. He is reported to have said that if a speech read well it was "a damned bad speech." A ridiculous judgment, surely; but measured by that standard all Fox's oratorical efforts must have been splendid successes. They read badly. Here is no stormy eloquence. Here is plenty of common sense in plain, unadorned language. The lighter passages are the best. Macaulay and Mackintosh in their estimates of the eloquence of Fox dwell solely on his passion; but Pitt

and Canning describe him as the wittiest speaker of his time. Some notion of his quality as a wit,—such as it is—may be obtained from an extract from his speech in the House of Commons, on May 24th, 1803, against the renewal of the war with France. Referring in a vein of badinage to the interchange of abuse by the newspapers of France and England he said :

This species of warfare, if not the most glorious, is undoubtedly the safest. In the first of poems by the first of poets it was recommended to two combatants just preparing to engage in battle; and the poet, who is no less a man than Homer, puts his advice into the mouth of the Goddess of Wisdom herself. "Put up your swords," she says, "and then abuse each other as long as you please." Such was the advice which I gave in this House to both countries long ago. Would to God it had been followed! for contemptible as abuse may be it most certainly is a lesser calamity than war. Such a species of war is one in which neither party is likely to experience any failure of ammunition. This seems to have been regularly imported, and in sufficient quantities from both countries. The Chief Consul complains that during a certain period every packet-boat that passed from Dover to Calais brought over a cargo of libels. Now this may appear a curious manner of freighting vessels, but it is singular enough that the glorious poet which I have already quoted should have imagined the very same thing, for in another part of the *Iliad*, upon a similar occasion he says—"As to abuse, you may have a ship-load of it, if you please." We may conclude, therefore, that the exportation of libels from one country to another is a very ancient practice, and that Homer spoke literally and not figuratively, unless we can suppose him to have had the gift of prescience as to the contents of the packet-boats which crossed during last summer from Dover to Calais.

The extravagant eulogies with respect to Chatham, Pitt, Burke and Fox which I have quoted, pale their ineffectual fires before the outbursts

of ecstatic laudations of Sheridan by his contemporaries. His most celebrated speech was delivered in the House of Commons, on February 7th, 1787, in support of the impeachment of Warren Hastings on the ground of his cruel ill-usage of the Begum princesses of Oude. Only a meagre and spiritless report of this five and a half hours' speech exists; but according to the universal opinion of the period, it was the most dazzling and powerful feat of oratory in modern times. The most famous of the parliamentarians of the day vied with each other in praising it. Burke declared, "It was the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument and wit united, of which there is any record or tradition." Said Fox, "All that I ever heard, all that I ever read, when compared with it, dwindles into nothing and vanishes like vapour before the sun." Pitt maintained that, "It surpassed all the eloquence of ancient and modern times, and possessed everything that genius or art could furnish to agitate and control the human mind." This fact is unquestionable, that the House deemed it necessary to adjourn after the speech, in order to give the assembly time "to collect its reason" and recover from the dazzling oratorical spell which had been cast upon it. "In the state of mind in which the hon. gentleman's speech has left me," said Sir William Dolden, moving the adjournment, "it is impossible for me to give a determinate opinion." "Nothing, indeed, but information almost equal to a miracle, should determine me to vote for the charge," said Mr. Stanhope, in seconding the motion; "but I have just felt the influence of such a miracle, and I cannot but ardently desire to avoid an immediate decision." But an even more extraordinary story of the marvellous effect of the speech remains

to be told. Logan, who wrote what is described as a masterly defence of Hastings, was present in the House. After Sheridan had spoken for an hour he said to a friend, "All this is declamatory assertion without proof." Another hour passed and he muttered, "This is a most wonderful oration." At the close of the third hour he confessed, "Mr. Hastings has acted very unjustifiably." At the end of the fourth he exclaimed, "Mr. Hastings is a most atrocious criminal." At last, before the speech was concluded he vehemently protested, "Of all monsters of iniquity the most enormous is Warren Hastings." A delightful anecdote, but—is it credible?

Sheridan, who, it was well known, prepared all his speeches most carefully, was frequently urged to furnish a report of this most amazing oration; but though offered £1,000 for it, he declined. "Nor, in doing thus, did he act perhaps unwisely for his fame," comments Moore, coldly enough, in his *MEMOIRS OF SHERIDAN*; while he declares elsewhere that he had read a shorthand writer's report of the speech and found it "trashy bombast." I can well believe it. The claptrap, the florid rhetoric, of much of Sheridan's oratory is amazing. No one could indulge more sublimely in the ridiculous than he.

I do not contend that Chatham, and Pitt, Burke, Fox, and Sheridan were not orators. Speeches are intended to influence the immediate audience to whom they are addressed; and they are to be judged by their success or failure in achieving that end. These men attained to great eminence in Parliament, and it must be assumed that in reaching it they were aided principally by their mastery of the spoken word, by the influence they exercised as orators over the Assembly. But I do say that their qualities have

been exaggerated. They were great orators, no doubt, but it is impossible that they could have been the mighty titanic beings—demigods, almost, such is the sublimity and majesty of their oratorical powers—which are presented to us in the anecdotes told of them by their contemporaries. Yet these myths have been accepted as true by generation after generation with the result that as effects of a similarly stupendous character are not obtained by latter-day orators it is supposed that Parliamentary eloquence has declined. Lord Salisbury speaking in the House of Lords, March 28th, 1889, on the death of John Bright said: "He was the greatest master of English oratory that this generation—I may, perhaps, say, several generations back—have produced. I have met men who have heard Pitt and Fox, and in whose judgment their eloquence at its best was inferior to the finest efforts of John Bright." I never heard Bright speak in the House of Commons but I have read his speeches; and to me they seem to be more aglow with the fire of the orator than the speeches of the great five. The charm of Bright is not, surely, that he comes nearer to our own time, or that he dealt with topics of yesterday and to-day,—topics of living interest. What greater issues could inspire an orator than those which came within the purview of the others? The war of American independence; the impeachment of Warren Hastings; the French Revolution; the struggle with Napoleon; the union with Ireland; the abolition of the slave trade; the emancipation of the Roman Catholics. Time can never rob these topics of their interest. What scope was there in the eternal truths or the eternal errors of these mighty causes for the display of the art of the orator!

A reputation for oratory in Parliament is not earned so easily to-day as it was then. A hundred years ago members were more content to sit and listen in the House of Commons than to stand up and talk themselves. Indeed, why should they have troubled themselves about taking part in the debates? Most of them lacked the gift of the ready tongue. The incentive of ambition to induce them to try to acquire it was wanting. Statesmanship was not an open profession. Exalted birth rather than native ability being then the passport to political advancement, leadership of the first rank and high ministerial office were restricted in both parties to the scions of a few aristocratic families. Nor was the spur of necessity applied to members to keep themselves prominently before the eyes of the constituencies with a view to retaining their seats, for to the mass of the electors the proceedings in Parliament were then enshrouded in almost impenetrable mystery. The speaking was, therefore, confined to the leaders of the two parties, and to a few members of strong character and independent thought on the back benches. As to the great inarticulate majority of the representatives, to vote straight on party lines was their simple conception of their Parliamentary duty.

Look at HANSARD. The record of the proceedings of Parliament in 1802 did not extend beyond one volume. In 1852 it filled four volumes. The ordinary session of 1902 (apart from the autumn sittings) produced as many as eleven volumes. This steady increase in the proportions of the sessional record of Parliament is, of course, due in some measure to the growth of the business of the nation, domestic and imperial. But it is due mainly to

the fact that speaking, instead of being left to the comparatively few as formerly, has become general. This remarkable change in the state of things has been produced by two momentous developments in our Parliamentary system—the establishment of the reporters' gallery, and the throwing open of leadership and office to ability. Parliament transacts its business now under a glass shade, as it were, in the full view of the nation; and even members, disposed by temperament and inclination to adopt the example of their predecessors and sit silent and vote, are compelled, with the watchful and censorious eyes of the constituencies upon them, to take an active part in the proceedings; while the desire for fame and position prompt the young, the energetic, the ambitious, to seize upon the flimsiest excuses for making speeches.

Undoubtedly, the impression generally conveyed by the torrent of the spoken word in Parliament which surges unceasingly session after session is that the quality of oratory has declined. But the impression is really deceptive. Members who practise the art of debate in Parliament indifferently have, for the reasons I have stated, multiplied. There is consequently a good deal of monotonous and wearisome talk; but take any great debate in our own time, any important debate within the past few years,—on the South African war, for instance, or on the Education Bill—and I venture to assert that it will not suffer in comparison with any of the classic debates of a century ago. The fallacy that parliamentary oratory is a lost art may be traced also to the mistaken belief that a hundred years ago every debate in the House of Commons was mighty in its transports and its thrills. The House of Commons a century

ago as to-day was often dull; and to-day as a century ago it has its hours of rapture. These are the hours when questions which appeal to the passions are being debated. But most of the subjects which occupy the attention of Parliament are of a business character, very important in their way but calling for plain, unadorned exposition, rather than for the burning words of the orator. Not even Chatham and Pitt, Burke, Fox, and Sheridan would, even if they could, invest such subjects with the glamour of eloquence. In truth it is not that oratory is dead, but that the form and style of the art have in recent times completely changed. The old instrument is out of tune. The "lofty style of oratory," as the forced conceits, the artificial similes, the fantastic imagery, the pompous phraseology and the tawdry rhetorical tricks of the eighteenth century have been called, would be entirely alien and spurious to the altered taste of the present generation. Anyone who attempted to indulge in the old traditional oratory in the House of Commons to-day would be received with uproarious laughter and overwhelmed with derision. For one thing, the simple note of sincerity which to-day appeals directly to an audience was wanting in the banal and windy rhetoric of the grand style. Its artificial flowers of speech have been replaced in our time by common sense and argument. There is to be sure a good deal of insincerity even in Parliament to-day. Under the party system our representatives, as a rule, dare not give expression to the pure unadulterated thought that is in them; they must needs make a compromise between their honest convictions and their loyalty to party or their desire to retain their seats. Still there is more simplicity, more

directness, more sympathy, and a greater grip on the reality of things in speeches to-day than in speeches a century ago.

Sir Robert Peel in his eulogy of Richard Cobden on the passing of the measures for the repeal of the corn laws, referred to the eloquence of the leader of the anti-corn law movement as "eloquence the more to be admired because it was unaffected and unadorned." That is the standard by which parliamentary oratory is now judged, and according to that standard there are in the House of Commons to-day as many masters of the magic of utterance as it possessed at any period of its history. But, nevertheless, the curious fact remains that oratory is still associated, in the popular mind, with a lofty, inflated, grandiose style of speaking, though, as everybody who has studied the subject knows, the great classical orators, Chatham, Pitt, Burke and Fox (excluding Sheridan perhaps), and in later times, Canning, Peel, Cobden, Bright and Gladstone, were never insipid and artificial, always making a sincere, direct, and, withal, simple appeal to their audience. It is only by accepting gaudy and tinsel speech as the real art of oratory that it can truly be said that to-day there is not a single orator of high rank in either House of Parliament. In truth, parliamentary speech-making never stood higher than it stands to-day for earnest thinking, for logical reasoning, for honest conviction, for seriousness of purpose; and these, after all, are the qualities of genuine oratory.

The highest triumphs of oratory have been produced in all countries and at all periods during times of public excitement, turmoil, and revolution. For a powerful speech a great subject or a great occasion is absolutely essential. When the oppor-

tunity arises the orator will not be wanting. All the mighty political questions of the last century,—the contest with Napoleon, Roman Catholic emancipation, parliamentary reform, the repeal of the corn laws, the disestablishment of the Irish Church, the Irish land laws, Home Rule, the South African war — questions which excited passion as well as reason, often transformed stammering, feeble speakers into inspired masters of language. Genuine eloquence is impossible without great convictions ; and it is ridiculous to expect thrilling flights of eloquence—the stirring appeals which warm the heart, while convincing the judgment—so long

as the public questions of the hour are comparatively petty and trivial, dealing with things evanescent, exciting only doubt, hesitation or indifference in men's minds. But if this country is ever again disturbed by a mighty political issue which arouses the abiding, elemental forces of human nature, or passes through a perilous ordeal on the happy issue of which her very existence depends, orators as passionate, as persuasive, and as convincing as the greatest of whom tradition speaks, will be heard again thundering, appealing, and denouncing in our Houses of Parliament.

MICHAEL MACDONAGH.

